
OLYMPIA INDIVISIBLE

Research Report: June 3, 2017

*[A new report](#) from the Congressional Management Foundation found that “**direct constituent interactions have more influence on lawmakers' decisions than other advocacy strategies,**” especially when interactions are personal*

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1. Trump's first trip abroad

General Summary:

Trump took his inaugural 9-day trip overseas, departing Washington on Friday, May 19, and returning home on Saturday May 27. His stops included Saudi Arabia, Israel and the West Bank, Vatican City, Brussels and Sicily.

Saudi Arabia

Summary: Trump met with King Salman of Saudi Arabia, and with leaders of a Gulf coalition, including the countries of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

Talking Points:

- Trump, during a speech about Islam, softened his usual tone, but urged the Muslim world to join the US in fighting extremism. He promised not to scold the Muslim leaders about human rights, as long as they are allies in security and economics. In contrast to language used in the US, Trump described Islam as “one of the world’s great faiths” and called for “tolerance and respect for each other.”
- “This administration is committed to a 180-degree reversal of the Obama policy on Iran,” said Mark Dubowitz, the chief executive of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.
- The Trump administration and Saudi Arabia also announced the creation of a joint Terrorist Financing Targeting Center to formalize longstanding cooperation and search for new ways to cut off sources of money for extremists.
- Trump hopes to realign the politics and diplomacy of the Middle East by forcefully reasserting American support for Sunni Muslim countries and Israel against Iran’s Shiite-led government.
- Trump announced a \$110 billion arms deal with Saudi Arabia as evidence of a renewed commitment by the US to the security of the Persian Gulf region. The package includes precision weaponry that Mr. Obama had held up over concerns that it would be used to kill civilians in the war in neighboring Yemen, as well as an antimissile system.
- Lockheed Martin signed a \$6 billion letter of intent to assemble 150 Black Hawk helicopters in Saudi Arabia, and General Electric announced projects it valued at \$15 billion.

Articles:

- [Expel ‘Evil,’ Trump Urges Muslims](#)
- [Saudis Welcome Trump’s Rebuff of Obama’s Views](#)
- [NYT - \\$110 Billion Weapons Sale to Saudis Has Jared Kushner’s Personal Touch](#)
- [NYT - Saudi Arabia to Invest \\$20 Billion in Infrastructure, Mostly in U.S.](#)

Israel

Summary: Trump met with Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Rivlin of Israel, as well as President Abbas with the Palestinian Authority. He became the first sitting US president to visit the Western Wall in East Jerusalem, Judaism's holiest prayer site, and he laid a wreath at the Holocaust memorial museum.

Talking Points:

- On his first day of a two-day trip, Mr. Trump told Israeli officials he was “deeply encouraged” by his conversations in Saudi Arabia regarding peace between Israel and the Palestinians.
- Netanyahu and his coalition government are wary of the bilateral deals the US president struck with Saudi Arabia and other Arab leaders. However, the Trump administration insisted that it will continue to honor the US commitment to Israeli military superiority in the region.
- The Israelis would like Trump to apply as much pressure as possible on Iran.
- Trump's lack of action on his promise to move the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem is a disappointment for Israel.
- Early this month, Trump told Abbas during an Oval Office visit that he wanted to be a “mediator” for peace between the Palestinians and Israel. While agreement has eluded administrations for decades, Trump declared it a task that would be “not as difficult as people have thought over the years.” The administration has not committed itself to supporting the two-state solution that has been bedrock U.S. policy for decades.

Articles:

- [WaPo - In Israel, Trump urges new Middle East harmony but faces old suspicions](#)
- [Israel 'disappointed' with Trump for not moving embassy to Jerusalem](#)

Vatican

Summary: Trump met with Pope Francis at the Vatican, and President Mattarella of Italy.

Talking Points:

- Pope Francis gave the president a copy of his 2015 encyclical on climate change. In a larger meeting, the Vatican's secretary of state urged Mr. Trump not to pull out of the Paris climate accord.
- A Vatican statement said the talks had included a discussion of health care, education and assistance for immigrants, as well as “the promotion of peace in the world through political negotiation and interreligious dialogue.”

Articles:

- [NYT - Highlights From Trump's Meeting With the Pope](#)
- [Donald Trump withdrawing from Paris agreement will be like slapping the Pope in the face, Vatican says](#)

Brussels – NATO

Summary: Trump’s trip to Brussels included meeting with European Union (EU) Officials and President Macron of France, and a dinner with leaders of 28 NATO countries.

Talking Points:

- His reception was less enthusiastic in Brussels, given his negative campaign comments about both NATO and the EU. His arrival was also shadowed by new criticism from British PM Theresa May, who complained about leaks of intelligence to the American media about this week’s deadly bombing at a concert in Manchester, England. May said she planned to “make clear to President Trump that intelligence that is shared between our law enforcement agencies must remain secure.”
- Surrounded by stone-faced allies, President Donald Trump lectured fellow NATO members for failing to meet the military alliance’s financial benchmarks, asserting that leaves it weaker and shortchanges “the people and taxpayers of the US.
- Last year, only 5 of the 28 countries met the 2 % goal: the U.S., Greece, Britain, Estonia and Poland.
- Fellow NATO leaders occasionally exchanged awkward looks with each other during the president’s lecture, and were taken aback by the aggressive tone of his speech.
- Some of the allies — particularly Eastern European nations deeply worried about Russian aggression — were hopeful that Trump would state a firm commitment to NATO’s Article 5 mutual defense agreement, which underpins the entire alliance. He refused to do so.

Articles:

- [WaPo - Trump scolds fellow NATO leaders: Spend more for military](#)
- [WaPo - Leading from the side: At NATO event, Trump waffles again on U.S. commitments](#)
- [NYT - In Brussels, Trump Scolds Allies on Cost-Sharing, and Stays Vague on Article 5](#)
- [Politico - Trump, EU struggle to get on same page in Brussels](#)

Sicily

Summary: Trump participated in the annual summit meetings with leaders from the Group of 7 industrial democracies (US, Germany, France, Britain, Italy, Canada and Japan).

Talking Points:

- Ahead of Trump’s attendance at Friday’s Group of Seven summit in Sicily, negotiators had been trying to get the US to sign a joint statement that would walk the administration closer to endorsing the Paris climate pact inked in 2015 to reduce carbon emissions.
- Under pressure, Trump backed a pledge to fight protectionism, but refused to endorse a global climate change accord, saying he needed more time to decide. His apparent reluctance to embrace the first-ever legally binding global climate deal that was signed by 195 countries clearly annoyed German Chancellor Angela Merkel. She concluded that the US is not the reliable partner her country and the Continent have automatically depended on in the past, and that Europe should pay more attention to its own interests.

- Ms. Merkel's strong comments were a potentially seismic shift in trans-Atlantic relations. With the US less willing to intervene overseas, Germany is becoming an increasingly dominant power in a partnership with France.

Articles:

- [NYT - G7 Leaders Divided on Climate Change, Closer on Trade Issues](#)
- [NYT - Merkel, After Discordant G-7 Meeting, Is Looking Past Trump](#)

2. Paris Climate Change Accord

Summary/Talking Points:

- On June 1, Trump announces his intention to withdraw the U.S. from the Paris climate accord.
- In December 2015, nearly every country in the world — 195 in all — agreed to the first global pact aimed at reducing emissions of planet-warming greenhouse gases. It was a landmark diplomatic achievement and the pinnacle of President Barack Obama’s environmental agenda.
- The United States will join Nicaragua and Syria as the only countries that are not a part of the Paris agreement.
- While Americans make up just over 4 percent of the world’s population, they are responsible for almost a third of the excess carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. China emits more carbon into the atmosphere today, but the United States has a long head start on burning coal, oil and natural gas.
- The agreement does not require a particular level of emissions cuts for a particular country; rather, each country set its own targets, with reductions to begin in 2020. By mid-century, the goal would be zero greenhouse gas emissions.
- Wealthy nations agreed to provide \$100 billion a year to help developing countries move away from fossil fuels and use more renewable power supplies.
- The Obama administration’s pledge under that agreement, in which the United States would cut by the year 2025 its emissions by 26 to 28 percent below their 2005 levels.
- **The U.S. can unilaterally change its emissions target under the agreement and financial contributions are voluntary.**
- Leaving the agreement undermines U.S. leadership and credibility, and positions China to fill the vacuum in global leadership.
- The existing agreements accommodated U.S. priorities, including voluntary emissions limits, action by developing countries and a non-legally binding agreement
- Since Trump has decided to leave, other countries — especially the poorer ones — could consider doing the same. That could reverse years of hard-won progress on climate change.
- Under the terms of the agreement, the United States cannot exit until Nov. 4, 2020 — the day after the next presidential election. That could make climate change a future campaign issue.
- Trump’s claims that China and India would take advantage of the deal and accelerate coal production are not based in reality.
 - In January, China stopped construction of 103 new coal-fired plants. China has cut its use of coal three years in a row. China has promised that by 2030, it would reduce the carbon intensity of its economy by 60–65 percent below 2005 levels, and increase the share of non-fossil energy to around 20 percent.
 - India relies heavily on coal, and production may double by 2020. However, India also committed to reduce emissions 33 to 35 percent of 2005 levels by 2030. The country is slowing its growth of coal use and just stated that the recent coal plants in construction may not be necessary until 2022.
- Trump lied about the effect of the agreement, saying at best it would only produce a 0.2 degree reduction in global temperature. In fact, the current country level pledges under the Paris agreement would reduce the planet’s warming by the year 2100 down from 4.2 degrees Celsius (7.6 degrees Fahrenheit) to 3.3 degrees Celsius (5.9 degrees Fahrenheit), or nearly a full degree Celsius.

- The economic and employment analysis Mr. Trump cited has been heavily criticized for faulty and biased assumptions.
- Trump’s fear-mongering about the threat of blackouts and brownouts cited fantastical economic growth assumptions.
- With the exception of a few coal and energy companies, corporate America was very critical of Trump’s move.
 - Two chief executives who sat on Mr. Trump’s economic advisory council — Elon Musk (Tesla) and Robert A. Iger Disney — said they were leaving that group because they disagreed with the exit from the Paris agreement.
 - Twenty-five companies, including Apple, Facebook, Google and Microsoft, bought full-page ads in The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal and The New York Post last month to argue that the U.S. should stay in the Paris agreement.
 - Tesla, Disney, General Electric, Facebook, Twitter, Google, Goldman Sachs Microsoft, Apple, Amazon, Uber, IBM, Shell, and Cargill CEOs took to Twitter to denounce Trump’s decision.
- Withdrawing from the agreement will damage U.S. competitiveness as other countries take the lead in the global transition to clean energy. It will also do serious damage to U.S. strategic interests around the world by alienating U.S. allies and undermining U.S. policy priorities.

Our MoCs (and our Governor):

- [Senator Murray Denounces President Trump’s Decision to Withdraw from Paris Climate Accord](#)
- [Congressman Denny Heck reacts to announcement that US will abandon Paris Climate Agreement](#)
- [Inslee, New York Governor Cuomo, and California Governor Brown announce formation of United States Climate Alliance](#)
- New York Governor Andrew Cuomo, California Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr., and Washington State Governor Jay Inslee today announced the formation of the United States Climate Alliance, a coalition that will convene U.S. states committed to upholding the Paris Climate Agreement and taking aggressive action on climate change. [Full press release](#)

To Do:

- Call our MoCs, asking them to keep the pressure on the White House to remain in the Paris Climate Accord.
- Rex Tillerson apparently supports the Paris Climate Accord. Contact him to voice your support by clicking on the following link: <https://register.state.gov/contactus/contactusform>
- Call the EPA and express support for remaining in the Paris Climate Accord.
 - (202) 272-0167
 - Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460
- Thank Governor Inslee for providing the means for WA to become a leader on clean energy and climate action.
 - Phone 360-902-4111.
 - Fax 360-753-4110.
 - Governor Jay Inslee, Office of the Governor, PO Box 40002, Olympia, WA 98504-0002
 - @GovInslee – Thanks for forming the US Climate Alliance with CA and NY.

Articles:

- [Trump announces withdrawal](#)
- [Annotated remarks](#)
- [Trump's lies](#)
- [What you need to know](#)
- [Private sector laments exit](#)
- [Trump's reasons don't add up](#)
- [Reuters - France, Italy, Germany defend Paris Accord, say cannot be renegotiated](#)

3. Travel ban

Summary:

- President Trump has signed 2 Executive Orders (EO13769 issued/effective on 012717; EO13780 effective date 031617). The original order called for immigrants from 7 Muslim dominant countries to be barred from entry to US. It imposed a 120-day halt on entry of all refugees, except those from Syria who were barred indefinitely. The second order reduced the number of countries subject to the 90 day ban to 6. During the ban, the administration would develop 'extreme vetting' procedures to reduce the probability that terrorists could enter our homeland.
- Lawsuits were filed and Temporary Restraining Orders (TRO) were issued against significant portions of the EOs and remain in effect after the government lost its appeals in both the 9th Circuit and 4th Circuit Federal Court of Appeals. This week the Justice Department requested the Supreme Court issue an emergency override to temporarily lift the TROs.
- In some circles, the thought is Justice Kennedy holds the key to this issue. It appears widely believed he would rule that, while Presidents are given great leeway to determine what actions to take in response to threats to our country, that does NOT allow actions taken which are discriminatory or otherwise unconstitutional.
- More than 120 days have come and gone since President Trump's first order. We are nearing the 90 day mark since the second order was issued. The government's argument against the TRO, in part, included "the ban was only for 90 days..." President Trump signed the order, telling us it was issued to prevent terrorists from entering our country while the administration evaluated 'extreme vetting' techniques. He intended to communicate an urgency based on threats. The DOJ had 3 filings on 6/1/17, adding 880 pages in their appeal.
- We've recently seen aviation rules change to include requiring non-citizens who travel to our country to permit their electronics/phones be accessed to allow viewing of the traveler's contacts/passwords/social apps. Unfortunately, some US citizens have had issues at our border when returning home. The EO and President Trump's rhetoric has already led to an almost \$2B loss in tourism to the US.

Our MoCs:

- Our MoCs have been very outspoken against the Muslim Ban and are strong advocates for zero-tolerance of discrimination. Our MoCs have stood strong with our Governor and Attorney General as our state has been petitioner in this matter.

To Do:

- There is no action recommended this week. Whichever way the Supreme Court decides, there will likely be action to take in the very near future. Therefore, this information is provided as background research.

Article: [NYT: Supreme Court Options on travel ban](#)

4. Russia Investigation

Summary:

Before inauguration, Jared Kushner proposed to Russian ambassador to establish secure communications with the Kremlin in their embassy, bypassing US intelligence and military. Comey to testify to Senate Intelligence committee next week. Senate Intelligence committee chair Burr given unusual blanket subpoena authority from committee. FBI and congressional committees investigating additional Trump associates in Russia investigation. Michael Flynn will provide documents to Senate Intelligence Committee as will his businesses. Comey went public in August about Clinton email investigation in large part due to document that FBI believed was not genuine. Russian Ambassador Kislyak being moved to UN undersecretary post, replace by current deputy foreign minister Antonov. Trump moving toward returning Russian diplomatic compounds Obama closed. Trump considering extensive management changes.

Talking points:

- In December, Jared Kushner proposed to the Russian ambassador to establish secure communications with the Kremlin in their embassy, bypassing US intelligence and military. Ambassador overheard being taken aback by proposal. The FBI is focusing on Kushner's motives in meeting in March with head of Russian bank controlled by Putin. Kushner had three more undisclosed contacts with Russians during campaign, none reported in security clearance process.
- Senate Intelligence committee chair Burr was given unusual blanket subpoena authority from committee. House committee in dispute over subpoena power after Devin Nunes issues "unmasking" subpoenas despite being recused from Russia investigation.
- FBI and congressional committees are investigating new Trump associates in the Russia investigation. They include Michael Cohen, Trump personal lawyer, Boris Epshteyn, a former campaign surrogate and Nigel Farage, the former head of the UK Independence Party.
- Former FBI director Comey initially closed public Clinton email investigation (a Justice Department prerogative) while airing extensive criticism of Clinton behavior, in large part in to a document that FBI had just found was dubious and possibly a Russian fake.
- Russian Ambassador Kislyak is being moved by Russia to a new UN undersecretary post for counterterrorism. He will be replaced in DC by current Deputy Foreign Minister Anatoly Antonov.
- Trump is moving toward returning the Russian diplomatic compounds in Maryland and new New York that Obama closed as part of his sanctions in response to Russian hacking of the election.
- Trump has widened his search for a new FBI director, and is reportedly looking at women candidates.
- Trump has hired Marc Kasowitz, a private attorney who has represented him in the past, to represent him in Russia investigation matters. He is to lead a team of private attorneys.
- Trump is considering extensive management changes in response to the escalating Russia investigations. They include changes in communications, possible replacement of major staffers, including chief of staff Priebus, creation of "war room" to plan strategy on Russian investigations.

Our MoCs:

- Both senators called for a special prosecutor to be appointed by the Justice Department, and praised appointment of Robert Mueller to that post. Congressman Heck has call for an independent commission for some months and signed discharge petition to move HR 356 (which would establish a commission) to the House floor.

To Do:

- Ask our senators to push for an independent commission with subpoena power and thank Cong. Heck for doing so. Only an independent commission can conduct an independent investigation and also share facts with the public.
- Encourage Cong. Heck to push for an aggressive House Intelligence Committee investigation. Encourage our senators to support aggressive Senate Intelligence Committee investigation. In the absence of an independent commission, the congressional investigations are the best way to get information on Russian involvement in the election and possible collusion out to the public. Members should not to let the appointment of a special prosecutor end or impede the congressional investigations.
- Urge moderate and concerned Republican senators to be vigilant regarding the congressional Russia investigations. They may include McCain, Graham, Collins, Murkowski, Sasse, Flake. Not all of these members are certain to be active, but all have shown concern about the Russian connection at one time or are more moderate.
- Thank our members of Congress for continuing to stand up for democratic accountability and public transparency in this investigation.

5. Healthcare – Status of Affordable Care Act repeal

Summary:

- **ACA Repeal** – Little change since last week. After the House passed its AHCA, the ball moved to the Senate, which must either adopt the House bill or pass its own legislation. Some senators continue to express doubt that legislation can pass the Senate; however, a working group of more conservative members are meeting regularly to craft such a bill. However, it's not time to take a victory lap – remember that passage of the AHCA in the House seemed in doubt until it did, indeed, pass! **Quick Take:** the AHCA decimates health coverage for low and middle-income people to fund enormous tax cuts for the wealthiest elites.

Talking Points on the CBO score of the House AHCA bill:

- Decimates Medicaid by cutting \$880 billion over 10 years: 14 million people will lose coverage in 2018 and 23 million will lose coverage over the next 10 years. States will have to cut benefits, cut enrollment or increase funding at the expense of other needed programs, such as public education. (The \$880 B cut is in addition to the \$600 B cut proposed in the Trump budget.)
- Would reduce the deficit by \$119 billion over 10 years, less than the \$150 billion projected for the earlier House bill.
- Reduces premium subsidies, replacing them with limited tax credits that will favor the young, healthy and wealthy. Older people will experience up to 30% premium increases. A low-income 64-year-old ACA enrollee would see premiums rise between 700 and 800%.
- The repeal bill allows states to waive the ACA's essential health benefits, required coverage for pre-existing conditions (community rating) and maintain coverage for youths until they are 26. States would have to either lower premium costs, increase the number of those covered, "advance the benefit to the public interest" of the state. CBO estimates that about one in six Americans would live in states that apply for waivers from key Obamacare provisions. While premiums would go down about 10%-30% in states that apply for waivers, plans would be skimpier covering fewer conditions and paying for less. If a state took the option:
 - Health plans could charge sick people far more for insurance, making it unaffordable, and offer plans with far less coverage
 - While such states would have to set up high-risk pools, the bill provides limited funding to make them work. Past state pools and the ACA transition pool all ran out of funding so quickly that they left those with pre-existing conditions without coverage. High risk pools appeared to help mostly for people with income or resources to pay the higher premiums.
 - Waiver states could also eliminate the essential health benefits included in the ACA, such as maternity and behavioral health care.

Large multi-state employers will be able to employ a waiver state's definition of essential health benefits, allowing them to remove the ACA protection against annual and lifetime limits and annual out-of-pocket spending. This will erode coverage even in the private sector.

Talking Points on Cost-Sharing Reduction Payments:

The Trump administration has indicated that they will stop the cost-sharing reduction payments at some point. These payments, totaling \$7 billion, are made to insurers on the exchanges to cover co-pays

and deductibles for 7 million low-income individuals. Without the reduction payments, insurance costs would increase dramatically, which would lead to much higher premiums the following year. This would take place for 2018 if the payments are not guaranteed for at least all of 2018. If low-income patient premiums increase and the ACA is not repealed, the federal government would have to spend more to cover the higher subsidies that would be paid to lower patient premiums. In general, the uncertainty regarding subsidies and possible repeal is seriously disrupting the markets, leading some insurers to drop out of the Exchanges and others to propose enormous rate increases to account for the increased risk. Thus, Republican and Administration actions are disrupting the viability of the Exchanges and the ACA – in essence, they argue that the ACA is failing and then take steps to make sure it does fail!

Our MoCs:

All of our MoCs voted against passage of the AHCA. Send a note thanking them for their principled opposition.

To Do:

The fight moves to the Senate now. Both Senator Murray and Cantwell are opposed to the AHCA. Contact them to urge their continued opposition. Write a letter to a local newspaper, citing the following points:

Call Script:

- VOTE NO on Trumpcare, don't strip away health care from Americans.
- Over 24 million people will lose coverage over 10 years
- Will decimate Medicaid with an \$880 billion cut that will force states to cut people from coverage. The vast majority of Americans oppose these cuts
- Will charge poor, older and sicker people more, making coverage unaffordable.
- The only winners will be the very rich, who will receive huge tax cuts.

6.S.200 - Restricting First Use of Nuclear Weapons Act

Summary:

- Senator Cantwell is considering co-sponsoring the Restricting First Use of Nuclear Weapons Act, which would require the President to get Congressional approval to launch a first-strike nuclear attack. **She wants to see that this is an issue her constituents care about**, especially since Members of Congress don't usually hear about nuclear weapons issues.

Talking Points:

- Currently, the President has sole authority to launch a first-use nuclear strike - a policy that increases the risk of nuclear war and is vulnerable to accidents and miscommunication.
- The use of even one nuclear weapon would be a humanitarian and environmental disaster almost beyond comprehension. The only cure for a nuclear attack is prevention.
- Sen. Ed Markey introduced a bill called the Restricting First Use of Nuclear Weapons Act of 2017, which would require congressional approval and a declaration of war to launch a first-strike nuclear attack. This as a basic way to ensure checks-and-balances on Executive powers.
- So far neither of our Senators have co-sponsored the bill, and only Rep. Jayapal has co-sponsored in the House.
- [more info on the issue here](#)

To Do:

- Call Cantwell's Washington, DC office at **(202) 224-3441**
- Track your contact! Tell whoever asked you, or reach out directly to Lilly Adams at (206) 547-2630 or lilly@wpsr.org. This is the only way we can assess our impact.
- **Do** state your name and the city you live in, so that you're recognized as a constituent.
- **Do** make your message personal, using your own words, but also keep it concise.
- **Don't** try to talk about everything – focus on this issue.
- **Don't** send a letter or call a local office – if we coordinate and all call the DC office, it will have a larger impact.

Sample Script:

Hi, my name is [Name], and I'm a constituent in Olympia. I'd like to encourage Sen. Cantwell to co-sponsor the Restricting First Use of Nuclear Weapons Act, Senate bill 200. I've recently heard more about our current policy on nuclear weapons, which gives the president sole authority to launch a first-strike nuclear weapons attack! I think this is really concerning, and increases the risk of nuclear war. This bill is an important way to make sure there are checks and balances on the ability to launch a nuclear attack. Thanks for passing along this message!

7.S 960 – Preserving Data in Government Act

Summary:

- S. 960 has been introduced in the Senate. A complement bill to the OPEN Government Data Act (H.R. 1770 and S. 760), this bill acknowledges the importance of publishing data in open and machine readable formats. It focuses on ensuring that federal government data sets be adequately preserved for long term access and use.

Talking Points:

- S. 960 was sent to Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs 4/27/2017. Chair Ron Johnson and Ranking Claire McCaskill
- Gary Peters (D) is the sponsor; Cory Gardner (R) is the only cosponsor
- Entrepreneurs, researchers, innovators, and citizens rely on public government data for everything from making business decisions and calculating college costs to forecasting weather and helping farmers. Taxpayer dollars fund this data's collection, and in return, the public should have the right to access and use such data. As Senator Gardner stated, "Once data has been published and made available to the public, it should remain available to the public."
- [The OPEN Government Data Act: What's at Stake?](#)
- [Bipartisan Legislation Would Ensure Open Access to Government Data](#)
- [OPEN Government Data Act moves to Senate floor after markup](#)

Our MoCs:

- Our MoCs are not sponsors or co-sponsors of S.960, H.R. 1770 or S. 760. I did not find specific support.

To Do:

- Ask Denny Heck to support H.R. 1770: OPEN Government Data Act
- Ask Senator Cantwell and Senator Murray to support S. 960: Preserving Data in Government Act of 2017 and S. 760: OPEN Government Data Act.

Script: Hello, my name is [NAME] and I'm a citizen from Olympia. [IF COMMITTEE, ADD: I'd like to pass along a message to the Chairman and members of the committee.] I'm calling to voice my support for S.960, the Preserving Data in Government Act. American taxpayers, who pay for the collection of federal data, should have the right to continue using it.

8. Education

Protect public school funding and student loan protections

Summary:

- In President Trump's 2018 budget, the Education Department faces \$11 billion in cuts, over one eighth of the department's total funding.
- The budget includes an increase of \$1.4 billion for a school choice initiative, including several hundred million dollars to expand charter schools and private school vouchers and a \$250 million program to give students publicly funded scholarships to attend private schools.
- Cuts include the elimination of \$1.2 billion in after-school programs and a \$2.3 billion program to reduce class sizes and train teachers.
- The budget eliminates 20 education programs, including the Special Olympics for students with disabilities, after-school programs for low-income students and programs for gifted children.
- For higher education, Trump's proposal would cut the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program, pull back on the federal role in subsidizing student loans and consolidate the many repayment plans now available to student borrowers into one plan.
- The budget cuts programs that help students pay for college, such as work-study.
- The budget proposes cutting the Office of Civil Rights staff by 10% (complaints are on a significant rise)
- DeVos has proposed increasing the budget for her own security by millions of taxpayer dollars.
- Secretary DeVos testified before a House appropriations subcommittee on May 24
 - Rep. Katherine Clark of Massachusetts brought up Lighthouse Christian Academy, a school in Bloomington, Ind., that receives \$665,000 in state vouchers and denies admission to LGBT children, asking DeVos if federal dollars would be allowed to fund schools that have discriminatory practices. DeVos repeatedly sidestepped the question, focusing on the themes of state control and parental choice.
 - DeVos said states should have the flexibility to decide whether students with disabilities who are using publicly funded vouchers to pay for private-school tuition should still be protected under the IDEA federal law.
 - DeVos told committee members that while the cuts might be alarming, they reflected "tough choices" on programs that had been deemed ineffective or duplicative.
 - DeVos demonstrated her ignorance of public education. At one point she said she believed high-poverty school districts get more funding than wealthier districts, (which is most often not true). At another point, she said she believes high-poverty school districts get more federal funding than wealthier districts (that is not always true).

Talking Points:

- The budget proposal was roundly criticized by advocacy groups representing students, teachers and school leaders
- Opponents have expressed alarm at how much it targets student-centered programs
- Gutting the public school system and targeting programs that serve poor, disabled, and at-risk children in order to fund religious and/or for-profit schools is inhumane and economically unsound.

- Reducing options for student loan repayment plans to a single plan could give one contractor too much power and ability to abuse student borrowers

Our MoCs:

- Murray has spoken out against the proposed Department of Education budget
- Cantwell has been critical of Trump's budget, but no tweets or press releases specific to the education budget.
- Heck has been critical of Trump's budget, but no tweets or press releases specific to the education budget.

To Do:

- Follow Senator Elizabeth Warren's [DeVos Watch](#)
- Call your MoCs and encourage them to reject and speak out against these funding cuts in the Department of Education budget.

Your script:

- Hi, my name is [NAME] and I'm a constituent from Olympia. I'm calling to urge [REP] to reject the Trump administration's proposed budget cuts to the education department.
- **OPTIONAL:** Share a personal story or reason why this matters to you. For example:
 - I (or someone close to you) am a product of the public school system, and I think more effort should be spent on improving it, not abandoning it.
 - I (or someone close to you) needed federal assistance to pay for higher education, and I support the programs that make it easier for students to do so and protect them from abuse by lending companies. It is important to me that my children (or young people close to you) have access to arts (or science, foreign language, etc.) education in their schools, and do not want to see those programs dismantled.
- Thank you for your time and attention.

Articles:

Washington Post: [Five startling things Betsy DeVos just told Congress](#)

NPR: [Education faces deep cuts, DeVos faces tough questions](#)

New York Times: [Betsy DeVos refuses to rule out giving funds to schools that discriminate](#)

New York Times Op-Ed: [DeVos on school vouchers](#)

The Atlantic: [Trump's Education budget takes aim at working class](#)

9.S. 881/H.R. 2585: 21st Century Glass-Steagall Act of 2017

Summary:

- A bipartisan bill to reduce risks to the financial system by limiting banks' ability to engage in certain risky activities and limiting conflicts of interest, to reinstate certain Glass-Steagall Act protections that were repealed by the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act, and for other purposes.
- S. 881 was introduced by Elizabeth Warren
- Maria Cantwell and John McCain are cosponsors

To Do: Kudos to Cantwell

Article: [21st Century Glass Steagall Act introduced in the Senate](#)

10. Other Issues

FBI Director

Nomination process for new FBI director: The Washington Post reported on May 30 that Trump interviewed two new candidates for FBI director. One was John Pistole, former deputy FBI director (2004-2010), director of the TSA (2010-2014) and currently president of Anderson University, his alma mater. The other was Christopher Wray, former head of the Justice Department's criminal division (2003-05), deputy assistant attorney general (2001-03) and US attorney in Georgia (1997-2001), now in private practice.

Debt limit

Politico reports that the need for Congress to expand the debt limit is coming much earlier than expected because tax receipts are down, and this is dividing the Congress and Administration. The Trump Administration and congressional Republicans had assumed they could include a debt limit increase in budget legislation to be passed in September. But the Treasury reports that the limit will have to be raised this summer to avoid default. The debt limit fight will result in splits in the Republican party. Some congressional Democrats want to use the issue to try to extract provisions they care about in a debt limit increase bill, while others say this approach is dangerous. In the Administration, Treasury Secretary Mnuchin wants a clean debt limit increase bill, though OMB director Mulvaney (a former Freedom Caucus House member) is not supportive. Those Democrats who want to use the limit fight are interested in focusing on extending the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), which expires in September or agreeing on a spending bill that avoids draconian cuts. Meanwhile, some conservative Republicans want to use the bill to push for sharp spending cuts.

Governmental Ethics

Office of Government Ethics: The Washington Post reported that the Trump administration backed down from its move to block an effort to disclose any ethics waivers granted to former lobbyists who now work in the White House or federal agencies. The Post reported that the White House granted ethics waivers to 17 appointees, including four former lobbyists. The waivers exempt the appointees from certain portions of ethics rules aimed at barring potential conflicts of interest.

In the White House, among those who received waivers were Reince Priebus (allowed to work with the Republican National Committee) and Kellyanne Conway (allowed to work with former clients of her polling firm) and White House Counsel Don McGahn (allowed to work on matters in which his former law firm is representing Trump, his campaign committee or related entities). Five other members of the White House Counsel's office also received waivers. A blanket waiver was given to all executive office appointees to interact with news organizations, which gives Steve Bannon permission to communicate with Breitbart News. Three lobbyists given waivers work at the National Economic Council. They include: Michael Catanzaro, allowed to work on issues of interest to his former energy sector clients; Sharira Knight was given a waiver to work on tax and financial policy issues after working as a tax lobbyist for Fidelity; Andrew Olmsted lobbied on bankruptcy and securities issues has an exemption to meet with former clients involved in Puerto Rico's financial crisis and work on insurance and financial policies.

The head of the Office of Governmental Ethics is in the final year of a five-year term.

Conservative groups target advertisers

Two conservative groups, Media Research Center and Media Equalizer, are planning to pressure advertisers to pull ads from progressive programs such as Rachel Maddow. They charge that Maddow and others are peddling conspiracy theories and smearing conservatives with personal attacks. The Media Research Center was created by former conservative radio hosts and Fox News regulars. They began this effort to defend Sean Hannity. They said they will be monitoring “leftist opinion programs” and when they go beyond political commentary, they will encourage advertisers to pull ads from the shows. They are targeting MSNBC shows featuring Maddow, Chris Hayes, Al Sharpton, Joy Reid, Chris Matthews, Lawrence O’Donnell and CNN’s Anderson Cooper, Don Lemon, and Fareed Zakaria.

Environment

EPA and pesticides: EPA’s Pruitt announced in March that the EPA will not ban the neurotoxin pesticide chlorpyrifos from food. Science shows that there are no safe uses of chlorpyrifos. Prenatal exposures to this chemical are associated with reduced IQ, loss of working memory, attention disorders and delayed motor development. It is acutely toxic and causes poisonings to workers and children near the fields who come into contact with it in the air or on the crops.

In its latest risk assessment of chlorpyrifos, EPA’s scientists determined that all food exposures exceed safe levels, with children ages 1-2 exposed to levels of the pesticide 140 times what EPA deems safe. The pesticide contaminates drinking water, making it unsafe. This pesticide’s drift travels to schools and homes in communities in agricultural areas in unsafe amounts. All workers who mix and apply chlorpyrifos are exposed to unsafe levels of the pesticide, even with maximum personal protective equipment and engineering controls, and field workers face unsafe exposures when they re-enter sprayed fields.

ExxonMobil: ExxonMobil management was defeated May 31 by a shareholder rebellion on climate change. Investors with 62.3% of shares voted to instruct ExxonMobil to report on the impact of global measures to keep climate change to 2 degrees centigrade on the company. The shareholder move was led by major financial advisory firms and fund managers who traditionally have played passive roles. Financial advisory firm BlackRock stated that it had cast its shares for the management and Vanguard and State Street Global Advisors likely did the same. Fidelity Investments also supported the measure. Public pension funds, including New York City’s, also supported it. The resolution says that the company “should analyze the impacts on ExxonMobil’s oil and gas reserves and resources under a scenario in which reduction in demand results from carbon restrictions and related rules or commitments adopted by governments consistent with the globally agreed upon 2 degree [Celsius] target. This reporting should assess the resilience of the company’s full portfolio of reserves and resources through 2040 and beyond, and address the financial risks associated with such a scenario.” It notes that other major oil companies including BP, Total, ConocoPhillips and Royal Dutch Shell have endorsed the two degree analysis.

Coral reefs: New NOAA research found that US coral reefs are on course to disappear within decades because of climate change. The research has shown that strict conservation measures in Hawaii have not spared corals from a warming ocean, with NOAA predicting yet more bleaching is likely off Hawaii and Florida this summer. The bleaching is not projected to be as severe as 2015, but there is now a general pattern where warmer than normal temperatures are the new normal. The US is likely to see the loss or severe degradation of most reefs in the coming decades.

A global coral bleaching event has shifted between the northern and southern hemispheres since 2014, affecting around 70% of the world's reefs. The terminal condition of Australia's Great Barrier Reef, which suffered bleaching along two-thirds of its 1,400-mile length in 2016 and 2017, is the most extreme example. Scientists have pointed out that America's main reefs, found off Hawaii, Florida, Guam and Puerto Rico, are facing a similar disaster. At the current rate it will be just 20 or 30 years before these reefs are dead. In 2014 and 2015, Hawaii's coral reefs suffered up to 90% bleaching, with some areas losing half of their coral cover.

Bleaching occurs when prolonged high temperatures in the ocean cause coral to expel the symbiotic algae that provides it with food and color. The coral turns white and can die if tolerable conditions don't return. The world's oceans have absorbed more than 90% of the extra heat generated by the release of greenhouse gases from human activity. Corals not killed off by bleaching are left weakened by the process and are less likely to survive if repeatedly subjected to above-average temperatures. Regular annual bleaching events, which recent research has forecast happening by the 2040s, are expected to undercut the resilience of reef ecosystems.

Antarctica: A crack in Antarctica's Larsen C ice shelf (on the Antarctic Peninsula) has extended so far that a portion of the shelf the size of Delaware (roughly 2,000 square miles), and representing 10% of the entire ice shelf, is close to separating from the larger ice shelf. It has grown by 11 miles in the past week and there is only 8 miles of ice connecting it to the larger ice shelf. In the past when large portions of an ice shelf have broken off, they soon fragment. The result of smaller ice shelves around Antarctica is to allow land-based glaciers to flow more rapidly to the sea, resulting in sea level rise, though there are fewer glaciers on the Peninsula than in West and East Antarctica, which are also losing mass.

State Medicaid waivers

Wisconsin is preparing to apply for a waiver to redesign its Medicaid program, requiring low-income adults to undergo drug screening to qualify for health coverage and setting time limits on assistance unless they work or train for a job. Wisconsin would limit people to 48 months on Medicaid, with exceptions for months in which they are working or in job training. It would make people answer a questionnaire and, if warranted based on their answers, take a drug test. If positive, they would have to go into treatment, which is in short supply in Wisconsin. Those who refused the screening or treatment would be denied Medicaid, but those on a waiting list for treatment could still get benefits.

Some states are taking up a Trump administration invitation to redesign Medicaid. Some things states are proposing include monthly premiums for people below the poverty line, time limits for coverage and fees for emergency room visits. None of the proposals, which must be approved by federal health officials, explicitly say the goal reducing Medicaid rolls, but the proposals would significantly raise the bar for very low-income people to get and stay on Medicaid.

Arizona is preparing to again seek a five-year limit on Medicaid benefits, as well as a work requirement and monthly premiums for people below the poverty line. The proposals were rejected last year because they could undermine access to care. The earliest state to win federal permission to compel work in Medicaid could be Kentucky which sent a waiver request to allow it to charge a small monthly insurance premium for people below the federal poverty line last August, as Wisconsin and Maine now want to do. Kentucky would remove people from Medicaid for six months if they were 60 days delinquent in paying.

Some health advocacy groups predict lawsuits if the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) lets states move ahead with their plans. The question will be whether the changes are legal because Medicaid waivers must still fulfill the program's central goal of helping the poor get access to health insurance.

Birth control in insurance coverage

The Trump Administration has drafted a rule that would allow religious employers to stop covering birth control in employer health plans, undoing a rule adopted by the Obama Administration in implementing the ACA requirement for essential health coverage elements in all health plans. The Office of Management and Budget announced that it was reviewing an interim final rule on this issue.