Olympia Indivisible
Research Report

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1. Trump’s Budget Proposal for 2018

Summary: The White House delivered its budget to the House on Tuesday, May 23; it contains deep cuts to the safety net, and represents massive tax cuts for the wealthy. The Republicans are unlikely to accept this budget.

Talking Points:
- The language surrounding this budget implies, and at time accuses, that anyone receiving assistance is choosing to drain the federal budget and not work. Simply put, they are committing fraud. This assertion has been allowed to be voiced as reality but without any explanation as to how that was established.
- Mulvaney (director of the Office of Management and Budget) said the government isn’t as much cutting entitlements as they will be allowing Americans to NOT receive federal funds. “This is, I think, the first time in a long time that an administration has written a budget through the eyes of the people who are actually paying the taxes,” Mulvaney told reporters on Monday by way of explaining the budget’s core philosophy, which he described more succinctly as “Taxpayer First.”
- Speaker Ryan feels that he is uniquely capable of designing a balanced budget, the effect of which will be the infliction of as much pain on those in need in this country as it simultaneously rewards the wealthy and corporations. However, he has posted nothing on the FY 2018 budget.
- There is ample evidence that austerity, trickle-down economics and block grants do not work.
- The debt ceiling limit will need to be raised months before Mulvaney predicted – before August recess.
- The House has not posted any scheduled hearings in the House Budget Committee so it’s unclear when the GOP will present its budget plan.
- The House is on recess until June 6th.

Our MoCs:
- Senators Murray, Cantwell to Trump Admin: Cutting off Funding for Public Transit Projects Threatens Jobs & Stifles Economy
- Sen. Murray on President Trump’s Budget: A Broken Promise to America’s Working Families and the Middle Class
- Sen. Murray Challenges Trump’s Budget Director to Explain Budget’s Drastic Cuts to Investments in Working Families
- Cantwell Statement on Trump Budget

To Do:
- Ask our MoCs to continue to fight for families and for those who need our help. The top 1% do not need massive tax cuts.

Articles:
- NYT - Trump’s Budget Cuts Deeply Into Medicaid and Anti-Poverty Efforts
- WaPo - Trump to propose big cuts to safety net in new budget, slashing Medicaid
- NPR - White House Proposes Deep Cuts To Safety Nets With 'Taxpayer First' Budget Plan
The budget includes sharp cuts to Medicaid, food stamps, EPA, TANF (welfare), medical research, unemployment insurance, as well as cuts to the Earned Income tax credit, SSI and SSI-Disability. In many cases, a higher burden of paying for anti-poverty programs would be shifted away from the federal government and onto the states. The budget will include $200 billion for infrastructure projects and $25 billion for six weeks of paid parental leave benefits and funding for construction of a border wall. There would be a short-term increase in military spending, but that would end in a few years in order to reach a balanced budget.

- **Medicaid** would be cut by $877 billion over 10 years. Medicaid currently provides health care assistance to 77 million low-income, elderly and disabled people, over 20% of all Americans. This largely reflects the cuts included in the House health care bill.
- **Medicare** is cut by $56 billion (down 0.6%).
- **Children’s Health Insurance (CHIP)** which insures 5.6 million children annually, is cut 3.3 billion over the next two years (down 19.4%). The government would no longer help cover children from families with incomes of more than 250 percent of the federal poverty level. Currently, 18 states plus DC allow families with incomes higher than 300 percent of the poverty line to sign up their children for CHIP.
- **SNAP (food stamps)** is cut fully $93 billion over 10 years (down 29%). (All cuts are reductions from current spending with no policy change). An average of 44 million people received these benefits in 2016, down from 47 million in 2013, but up sharply from 28 million in 2008.
- **TANF (welfare)** is cut 22 billion over 10 years (down 13%).
- **Unemployment insurance (UI)** is cut over 53 billion over 10 years (down 11.5%).
- **Earned income tax credit (EITC)** is cut by $23 billion over 10 years (down 8.3%).
- **Community Development and Community Services block grants (CDBG/CSBG)** would be eliminated.
- **Social Security Income (SSI)** which provides benefits to 8 million elderly or disabled low-income people is cut by $21 billion (3.2%).
- **SSI-Disability** pays benefits to 10 million disabled people below retirement age is cut by $31.4 billion (down 1.8%)
- **Workforce Investment Act** funds help to job seekers (including unemployment insurance recipients and is cut 39%.
- **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)** would be cut 31%. The proposal eliminates dozens of environmental programs entirely, including major ongoing restoration projects such as Great Lakes and Puget Sound.
- **Public TV and radio**: all funding would be eliminated.
- **After-school programs**: would be cut by over $1 billion.
- **Federal employee retirement**: Benefits would be sharply cut.
- **Federal Drug Administration (FDA)** would be cut from $2.74 billion to $1.89 billion.
- **Bonneville Power Administration (BPA)**: would sell BPA’s publicly-owned power grid. BPA owns 75% of the high-voltage transmission lines in the Northwest. It is used market power from 31 hydro dams and to provide power to California. It includes 15,000 miles of lines and nearly 300 substations. The budget plans raising nearly $5 billion by selling the lines from 2018 to 2027. An estimated $1.8 billion is expected in 2019.
- **Consumer Financial Protection Bureau**: which protects consumers from financial fraud and predatory practices and currently has independent budgetary authority, would see budget cuts of $6.8 billion between 2018 and 2027. This was designed by Elizabeth Warren and included in the Dodd-Frank financial regulation legislation.

The budget also seeks massive cuts in spending on medical research and disease prevention programs. The overall **National Institutes of Health (NIH)** budget would be cut from $31.8 billion to $26 billion.
- **National Cancer Institute** would see a $1 billion cut compared to its 2017 budget.
- **National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute** would see a $575 million cut.
And today, I’m asking you to do it again. And thousands of you this is from public schools afraid of. This morning from Patty Murray regarding the Department of Education: "scorched earth" budget in spite of intense pushback in Congress, national environmental organizations, and the public. "If we implemented this budget, you’d have to retreat from the world or put a lot of people at risk. “This budget is not going to go anywhere.” Former EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy called it a “scorched earth” budget in spite of intense pushback in Congress, national environmental organizations, and the public.

- It assumes that the budget will be balanced in 10 years, based on a dramatically inflated growth estimate of 3% annually, with nothing to back it up. As a result, the budget assumes $2.1 trillion in revenue it attributes to the difference between the wildly high economic growth projections in the budget and what most economists project.
- The budget also assumes that the huge tax cuts proposed would have no effect on revenues at all. It assumes a further bonus from the tax cuts (beyond the $2.1 trillion in spending with no basis) that will cancel out the massive rate cuts. The budget would cut the corporate tax rate from 35% down to 15%, but assumes that corporate tax rates would increase every year. It assumes collection of $328 billion in estate and gift taxes over 10 years, but provides that the estate tax would be eliminated.
- Even with the wildly optimistic assumptions about growth and the effects of proposed tax cuts, the budget includes over $1 trillion in unidentified cuts to miscellaneous programs to balance the budget. Trump assumes cutting all non-defense, discretionary spending by 2% annually. Given inflation and the fact of a growing population would normally increase each year. Over 10 years, the 2% annual cuts would result in a 27% cut across the board to these programs.
- The budget will include $200 billion for infrastructure projects over 10 years, but only $5 billion for the coming fiscal year. The Administration is drafting plans to privatize public assets such as airports, bridges, highway rest stops and other facilities, according to top officials and advisers. The goal is to provide incentives for private, state and local spending on infrastructure. To entice state and local governments to sell some of their assets, the Administration is considering paying them a bonus. The proceeds of the sales would then go to other infrastructure projects. However, the budget also cuts a wide range of existing infrastructure funding. A criticism of the Administration approach is that it would provide massive incentives to developers and privatize public assets, essentially paying most of the cost for developers to own and profit from public assets.
- Members of Congress are expected to ignore many of Trump's cuts included in his budget proposal. For example, both Democrats and Republicans have defended the Great Lakes Restoration Program and are expected to keep its funding in the 2018 spending bill. Speaking about the budget overall Republican Senator Lindsey Graham said, “If we implemented this budget, you’d have to retreat from the world or put a lot of people at risk. “This budget is not going to go anywhere.” Former EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy called it a “scorched earth” budget in spite of intense pushback in Congress, national environmental organizations, and the public.
- From Patty Murray regarding the Department of Education: President Trump released his full budget request this morning -- and when it comes to what he did with Secretary DeVos on education, it is exactly what we were afraid of. Just like we knew she would, Secretary DeVos is fighting as hard as she can to cut millions of dollars from public schools -- where the majority of students go to school -- in order to push her own agenda. We know this is wrong for our students, and we’ve got to fight back. When Secretary DeVos was nominated, thousands and thousands of you -- and millions across the country -- stood up and showed your support for public schools. And today, I'm asking you to do it again. The Trump/DeVos budget would weaken communities by eliminating funding for afterschool programs, grant aid for struggling college students, teacher and principal training
programs, and so much more. Secretary DeVos’ plan would siphon taxpayer funds from public schools and push them to unaccountable private and religious schools that often leave children worse off. If she truly wanted to help students across the country, she would abandon her ideological commitment to privatization and invest in our public schools so every child, in every community, has access to a quality public education. I am hoping that Republicans in Congress stand with me to reject this awful education budget. But it’s going to take a lot of pressure from the grassroots, and it’s not going to happen without a fight.
2. Health Care

A. CBO Score

Summary: The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) reported that the House ACA repeal bill would leave 23 million more Americans uninsured by 2026 and 14 million in 2018. The bill would reduce the deficit by $119 billion between 2017 and 2026, less than the $150 billion projected for the earlier House bill.

Talking Points:
- Premiums would vary significantly according to health status and type of benefits provided and less healthy people would face extremely high premiums.
- Premiums would be lower on average than under the ACA because sick people would have less access to coverage and the quality of insurance would be lower (higher deductibles and copays, fewer covered services and coverage harder to get for those with pre-existing conditions). A low-income 64-year-old Obamacare enrollee would see premiums rise between 700 and 800 percent.
- People who are less healthy, including those with preexisting or newly acquired medical conditions, would ultimately be unable to purchase comprehensive non-group health insurance at premiums comparable to those under current law, if they could purchase it at all. This is despite the additional funding that would be available under the bill to help reduce premiums.
- As a result, the individual markets in those states would become unstable for people with higher-than-average expected health care costs.
- CBO estimates that about one in six Americans would live in states that apply for waivers from key Obamacare provisions, like the requirement to charge sick and healthy people the same prices or cover a set of essential health benefits.
- The CBO estimates that premiums would go down under the bill about 10%-30% in states that apply for waivers, due to sicker and older people losing insurance coverage.

Our MoCs:
- Sen. Murray Remarks on Newly-Released CBO Score on Trumpcare
- CBO score on ‘Trumpcare’ should be warning to Senate GOP, Murray says
- Cantwell Statement on non-partisan CBO Score of House Republicans’ Health Care Bill

To Do:
- Thank our Senators for standing up for affordable healthcare coverage for all.

B. Reduction of Cost-Sharing Payments

Summary: The New York Times and Washington Post reported that Trump told his aides in mid-May that he wanted to stop the cost-sharing reduction payments. These payments, totaling $7 billion, are made to insurers on the exchanges to cover co-pays and deductibles for low-income individuals.

Talking Points:
- Low-income is defined as earning more than $16,000 but less than $30,000 for an individual. The less money people make, the more help that is provided. These payments are provided to cover costs of 7 million people out of the total of 12 million purchasing insurance through the exchanges. Vox reported
that someone who doesn’t qualify for the reductions and buys a typical ACA plan could have to pay as much as $3,609 for a deductible before her plan starts to cover her care. But a person who qualifies for the most generous reduction (whose income is at the poverty line or a little above it) could have to pay only $255 before coverage kicks in. On average, cost-sharing reductions lowered out-of-pocket costs by about $1,000 for each person.

- The Washington Post reported that the Trump Administration and House Republicans have asked the DC Appeals Court for a 90-day postponement in a federal-court case over cost-sharing reduction payments. This would be the third postponement in the case so far. This means that the government will continue to provide the cost sharing reductions through much of the summer.
- When the ACA was first passed, the law provided for these payments, but did not provide a funding source for them, due to an oversight. This was discovered after Republicans took back the House in the 2010 election. The Republican-controlled Congress has refused to appropriate funds to pay for them. The Obama Administration used flexible funds to cover the $7 billion in costs. The House Republicans sued the Obama Administration over this funding use in federal court and won in the trial court. The Obama Administration then appealed.
- Under the ACA, health plans are required to offer individuals under 250% of the poverty line a plan with lower deductibles and copays even if they receive no federal funds. 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.
- The Los Angeles Times reported that the administrator for the HHS Centers for Medicare and Medicaid suggested a bargain to insurers in which the Administration would continue to fund the reductions if the industry supported the House Republican ACA repeal bill.
- The insurance industry, state officials and congressional Democrats are exerting pressure to not trigger sudden chaos in the exchanges. In states with the earliest deadlines for insurers to file plans to take part next year, insurers have mentioned the uncertainty surrounding the subsidies as part of the reason they are proposing large rate increases. The health insurance trade organization has stated that uncertainty is undermining the individual market for 2018. They urged Congress to promise that the payments will continue through the end of 2018.
3. WH Tries to Block Disclosure of Ethics Waivers Granted to Former Lobbyists

The White House Demands the Office of Government Ethics Withdraw Request for Copies of Waivers

Summary: The Office of Government Ethics, through its director Walter Staub, requested all federal agencies to send to the OGE copies of waivers that each agency had for former lobbyists who were now working for the White House or for the federal agency. Dozens of former lobbyists and industry lawyers are now working in the Trump Administration, including working on projects that they worked on for private industry – in a kind of fox-in-the-henhouse arrangement. While agencies can hire former lobbyists, the agency has to review and provide a waiver for that lobbyist. Staub, on behalf of the OGE, wants copies of the waivers.

Talking Points

• It is not unusual to ask for copies of waivers. The Obama Administration had waivers for former lobbyists now employed by the administration and always provided copies of those waivers to OGE when requested.
• The action by the Trump Administration in demanding that OGE withdraw its request for waivers is considered “extraordinary”, and “unprecedented and extremely troubling” by people who work or previously worked for the OGE.
• Democrats in Congress have raised concerns about the Administration’s efforts to hire former lobbyists in high-ranking political jobs. Members of the House Government Oversight Committee have demanded that the Trump Administration comply, and a group of Senators have joined that call.
• Director Staub responded to the Administration by writing: “O.G.E. declines your request to suspend its ethics inquiry and reiterates its expectation that agencies will fully comply with its directive. Public confidence in the integrity of government decision making demands no less.”
• This effort by the Trump Administration appears to be an attempt to intimidate federal ethics officers, without actually ordering them to ignore OGE’s request, said a former White House ethics lawyer for the Obama Administration.
• NYT - White House Moves to Block Ethics Inquiry Into Ex-Lobbyists on Payroll
• NPR - Ethics Agency Rejects White House Move To Block Ethics Waiver Disclosures

Our MoCs:

• Senators Murray, Cantwell Demand Explanation of White House Attempt to Block Ethics Waiver Disclosure

Things to Do:

• Contact Rep. Denny Heck and ask him to join his voice with those from the House Government Oversight Committee to demand the Trump Administration withdraw its request to Director Staub to withdraw his request for copies of the waivers.
• Contact Senators Murray and Cantwell to join the senators who are demanding the same.
4. WA State HB 2200 – Secure Privacy and Security of Internet Users in WA

Summary: There are many bi-partisan supporters of HB 2200. The bill had a public hearing and passed the House. The Senate returned the bill back to the House Rules Committee on May 23.

Background: President Trump recently signed legislation blocking rules that would require Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to get your permission before selling, using, or transferring information about your online browsing history. The Washington Legislature has an opportunity to create its own rules to put you more fully in control of your online reading, shopping, medical, and other private data. Urge them to pass HB 2200 to protect the privacy and security of internet users in Washington state!

Talking Points:
- Internet customer must be able to opt-in before data can be sold.
- Access should be provided for customer to grant, deny, or withdraw approval.

Local legislators - WA Legislator Districts - Map Finder
- District 22 includes most of Olympia, Lacey and Tumwater. District 22 legislators include: Sen. Sam Hunt (D), Rep. Laurie Dolan (D), and Rep. Beth Doglio (D)
  - Representatives Dolan and Doglio are co-sponsors of HB 2200.

To do:
- Comment on the bill to let your representative and senator know your thoughts:
  - HB 2200 - 2017-18 Protecting the privacy and security of internet users - Comments
  - Additionally, you may want to contact your representatives by phone or email. Access to representatives' contact information can be found under the above link (Map Finder).
- Scripts: I approve of HB 2200. Since the federal government rolled back internet security rules, we need a state law to secure our privacy.
- Kudos: You may want to than your state representative if they are a co-sponsor
5. The US - Turkey Protest Crisis

Summary:
- On May 16, 2017, while on a trip to the US, Turkish President Erdogan was met at the Turkish Embassy in Washington D.C. by anti-Turkish protestors. The protestors, mainly objecting to the Turkish government’s treatment of ethnic Kurds, were peaceful and not located on Turkish Embassy property. For reasons which are unclear, a physical confrontation occurred between the protestors and Erdogan’s security detail. Members of Erdogan’s security detail were videoed crossing the street and violently attacking the protestors with fists and feet. Metro Police had a difficult time halting the violence.
- As a result of the melee, nine injured persons were transported to the hospital for treatment. Two of the anti-Erdogan protestors were arrested and charged for their actions, and two of the Erdogan security detail were detained, only to be released later due to their diplomatic status.
- The Metro Police Chief characterized the assault as “a brutal attack”. The US State Department condemned the attack as an assault on free speech and warned Turkey that the action would not be tolerated. Senator McCain called for the Turkish Ambassador to be thrown out of the country.
- Turkey responded to events by stating that the protestors were solely responsible for the confrontation, that US security personnel were overly “aggressive”, and that the “provocative” demonstration should not have been allowed to take place.

Talking Points:
- The US Constitution is the supreme law of our nation, with all other laws, regulations and/or official determinations or orders, either state or Federal, subservient to its provisions.
- A US individual may, at their sole discretion, choose to exercise, or choose to not exercise, their constitutional rights. They do not need the permission or approval any other individual or entity.
- The 1st Amendment of the Constitution guarantees the right of persons to peaceably assemble and exercise their right to free speech.
- In the US political protest is generally considered to be a form of protected free speech.
- Protected political speech may be offensive or unwelcome to the ears or eyes of others. The content of protected political speech is based on the desires of the speaker, not the recipient.
- All persons within the jurisdiction of the US are subject to our laws. If a person enjoys diplomatic immunity, they are subject to expulsion if they do not conform to our laws and norms.
- Did the Turkish President’s Security Detail Attack Protesters in Washington? What the Video Shows
- NYT - Did the Turkish President’s Security Detail Attack Protesters in Washington? What the Video Shows

To do:
- Contact our MoCs and the White House.
- Script: “The recent assaults by the Turkish security services against peaceful demonstrators are an affront to the United States, our citizens, and our laws. This must not be tolerated; if ever repeated, I demand that the Turkish diplomats involved, including the Turkish Ambassador, be immediately expelled from the US.”
  - Representative Denny Heck: (202) 225-9740
  - Senator Maria Cantwell: (202) 224-3441
  - Senator Patty Murray: (202) 224-2621
  - The White House: (202) 456-1111
The US – Turkey Protest Crisis
Detailed Discussion

The event.

On May 16, 2017 Turkish President Erdogan was at the Turkish Embassy in Washington D.C. after a meeting with President Trump. Across the street from the Turkish Embassy were several dozen protesters, waving Kurdish flags and protesting the Turkish government’s stance toward the Kurds and Armenians, and Erdogan’s perceived assault on the country’s democratic institutions. Near the Turkish Embassy there was a group of counter-protesters supporting Erdogan, along with armed plain-clothes members of President Erdogan’s bodyguard.

As is often the case, it is unknown who or what started the ensuing physical clash. What is documented is that Erdogan’s bodyguards were filmed crossing the street and violently attacking the protesters, repeatedly punching and kicking them. Video exist which indicates that Erdogan witnessed the assault from the exterior of the Turkish Embassy; it is not known if he ordered the assault or took any steps to stop it.

The police on scene were unable to initially stop the confrontation, which continued for several minutes. Ultimately eleven people were reported injured, including a police officer, and nine were taken to a hospital. Two Secret Service agents were also assaulted.

Arrests and release.

The police said two of the anti-Erdogan protesters were arrested and charged with aggravated assault and assault on a police officer. The police also briefly detained two of Erdogan’s bodyguards. These persons, who have diplomatic immunity from prosecution, were later released and left the country with Erdogan.

Why did this happen?

At its core, this event was part of a long-standing and bitter conflict between the ethnic Turks and Kurds in modern Turkey, which rises almost to the level of a cultural “blood feud”. Turkish President Erdogan’s trip to the US brought the intransigent opposing factions into close contact in Washington D.C., where Erdogan’s security detail resorted to the violent tactics used within Turkey against political protesters. There is a clear lack of understanding by the Turkish government that while in the US all persons must conform to our laws, and that peaceful political protest, regardless of how offensive to our government or its allies, is constitutionally protected speech in the US.

Modern Turkey was formed from the remnants of the Ottoman Empire after WWI. The victorious European powers partitioned the Ottoman Empire, which had been allied with Germany, into separate countries with little regard as to their ethnic or cultural composition or pre-existing historical animosities. This actually is the genesis of much of the troubles we see today in the Middle East: hostile, discrete cultures forced together into single, unstable, weak political entities (Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, etc.), which has often led to the rise of the harsh autocratic rule seen in the region.

Turkey, nominally a secular state, is culturally a composite country, with ethnic Turks being the predominate group. The Kurds, the largest non-Turkic ethnicity in Turkey at approximately 20% of the population, are found primarily in the east and southeast of the country. The historic Kurdish homeland spanned portions of modern Turkey, Iraq, and Iran. Kurds, culturally and linguistically closely related to the Iranian peoples, generally wish to retain their separate cultural identity and regain their political independence. The Turkish government strongly opposes any and all actions which encourage a Kurdish separatist movement, the formation of an independent Kurdish state on their borders, or the strengthening of the Kurdish forces in the region. The result is an ongoing
armed conflict between Kurdish separatists and the Turkish government that has spanned decades and cost many lives.

Over the years Turkey has taken active steps to suppress and marginalize their Kurdish minority. There have been several massacres of Kurds within Turkey. The use of the terms Kurd, Kurdish, and Kurdistan is officially banned in Turkey, as is the public or private use of the Kurdish language.

The Kurds have responded overtly to this suppression with guerrilla-style violent actions and attacks characterized by the Turkish government as terrorist acts, and covertly by working to retain their discrete cultural and linguistic identity. Many Kurds have left Turkey for the safety found in other nations, where they have greater freedom to actively work towards Kurdish independence. The number of ethnic Kurds in the US is estimated to be between 15,000 and 20,000 people.

After the Iraq War in the early 2000s the US faced a quandary: did it want to support Turkey and avoid the creation of a Kurdish state in northern Iraq, or did the US wish to partition Iraq into ethnic Sunni, Shia, and Kurdish regions? The Turkish aversion to strengthening or liberating the Kurds is so strong that it was thought to be one of the reasons that US forces were not allowed during the war to stage an attack through Turkey to enter the Kurdish region of northern Iraq. While the Kurdish area in northern Iraq has significant oil reserves, and an independent Kurdish state was thought to be viable, the US eventually chose not to partition Iraq.

However, with the recent rise of Isis and the demonstrated inability of the current Iraq regime to stop their geographic spread, the US sought effective non-state military allies in the region. The largest city that Isis had seized in Iraq was Mosul, which lies within the Kurdish region of Iraq. In the fighting around Mosul the irregular Kurdish troops proved themselves to be effective fighters if provided with aid, and the US, starting in the later part of the Obama presidency and continuing on into the early Trump presidency, began to rely on, and provide material support to, the Kurds in their fight against Isis. This recent US support for the Kurds has strengthened and legitimized them somewhat, but has also angered the Turkish government.

After a recent failed coup, Turkish President Erdogan has consolidated his power within Turkey. He has jailed members of opposition parties, discharged or imprisoned civil servants, passed repressive laws, and restricted freedoms of the press and speech within Turkey. By most measures, Erdogan has become an autocrat, suborning Turkish laws to justify his actions and his continued rule. But Erdogan’s direct reach is limited to Turkey.

As mentioned above, there exists a significant ex-pat Kurdish population in the US that opposes Erdogan, and while residing here these people enjoy the free speech protections of our Constitution. Erdogan’s visit to the US gave these Turkish Kurds an opportunity, not allowed within Turkey itself, to openly make their political views known to the Turkish President via peaceful, public political demonstration. It was during the anti-Erdogan protests that the demonstrators were openly assaulted by Erdogan’s bodyguards, an accepted tactic within Turkey because Kurdish nationalists are seen there as terrorists.

The US response.

D.C. Metropolitan Police Chief, Peter Newsham, characterized the assault as “a brutal attack”, a judgement supported by the video evidence.

The US State Department condemned the attack as an assault on free speech and warned Turkey that the action would not be tolerated. “We are communicating our concern to the Turkish government in the strongest possible terms,” said Heather Nauert, a State Department spokeswoman. “As we noted previously, the conduct of Turkish security personnel last week was deeply disturbing,” she said. “The State Department has raised its concerns about those events at the highest levels.”
US lawmakers called the episode an “affront to the United States”, calling for Turkey to apologize. Senator McCain suggested that the Turkish Ambassador be ejected.

Beyond the position articulated by his State Department, President Trump has made no reference to this incident that I could find.

The Turkish response.

The Anadolu Agency, a state-owned Turkish news service, reported that members of the Turkish president’s security team were involved in the attack.

The Turkish embassy released a statement that contradicted United States officials and video evidence and blamed the demonstrators, who, it said, had been “aggressively provoking Turkish-American citizens who had peacefully assembled to greet the president.” The Turkish president’s supporters and security forces were reacting in self-defense, the statement said.

Turkey’s ambassador to Washington, Serdar Kilic, later defend his country’s actions. “Differences of opinion are natural among two allies,” he said, but added: “There is a big difference between freedom of expression and expression of solidarity with terrorists and terrorism. It was disappointing to see friends of PKK (Kurdistan Workers’ Party) on the streets of Washington, D.C.”

In Istanbul Turkey’s Foreign Ministry lodged a formal protest with the U.S. ambassador over “aggressive” actions by American security personnel during Erdogan’s visit to Washington.

Turkish diplomats also faulted the local police, saying they had failed to quell an “unpermitted” and “provocative” demonstration.

Sources.

Politico: Turkey slams U.S. over ‘aggressive’ acts against bodyguards

Star Tribune: The Latest: US, Turkey in dispute over fight in Washington

Washington Post: Turkey condemns U.S. over ‘aggressive’ acts against Erdogan’s guards during D.C. visit

Washington Post: Erdogan’s guards clash with protesters outside Turkish ambassador’s D.C. residence

Salon: Turkey criticizes American law enforcement after Turkish president’s bodyguards attacked protesters

CNN: Turkish security involved in DC protester assault

NYT: In Video, Erdogan Watches as His Guards Clash With Protesters


Business Insider: Protest outside the Turkish Embassy in Washington turns bloody after Trump meets with Turkey’s president

Voice of America (with video): US Summons Turkey Envoy Over DC Clashes During Erdogan Visit

YouTube (video): Demonstration at Turkish Embassy in DC Turns Violent
6. Net Neutrality

Summary:
- On Thursday, May 19, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) voted 2-1 along party lines to propose a new review of net neutrality rules.
- After decades of debate, net neutrality rules were adopted in 2015. The final rules treat broadband as an essential public utility (Title II of the Communications Act of 1934).
- This classification enabled light regulation, to prevent broadband providers from giving preferential treatment to any particular content. The rules are designed to prevent throttling, blocking, paid prioritization, and other interference with the distribution of digital media and information.
- GOP Congressional talking points were written by the cable industry.
- The vote comes weeks after President Trump and Congressional Republicans eliminated key online privacy protections for Americans.

Talking Points:
- The Telecommunications Act of 1996 updated the Communications Act of 1934. In 1996, most users received dial-up or DSL service through their local phone company, and used AOL or Earthlink as their Internet Service Provider (ISP).
- The media industry has seen significant consolidation in recent years. Now, broadband access is dominated by relatively few companies that hold monopolies in multiple markets.
- ISPs/broadband companies also invested heavily in content companies and many are also content providers. It’s critical that these gatekeepers don’t manipulate, restrict or prioritize information based on its content.
- The net neutrality protections were adopted after a lengthy notice and comment period in which 4 million people participated.
- The existing rules have withstood legal challenges.
- Consumers/constituents overwhelmingly oppose changing the free and open Internet to a “pay-to-play” system with Internet fast lanes and slow lanes.
- Tech firms see net neutrality as key to their businesses and strongly supported the existing net neutrality rules. Doing away with net neutrality will only help cement the power of internet behemoths.
- Pai claims the rules have suppressed network investment. There is considerable debate whether this is true, but any reductions in capital spending are likely due to completed network buildouts, lower costs for upgrades, a maturing business cycle, and a shift towards acquisition and content.
- Reflect the Trump administration’s broader efforts to restrict information from the public.

Our MoCs:
- Cantwell leads group of 15 female Senators, including Murray, who sent a letter to the FCC Chairman “Highlighting Importance of Net Neutrality to Women Across America”: “Net neutrality is particularly important to women, as it affords women-owned businesses and startups an even playing field when competing with more established brands and content.”
- Murray statement on website: “Rules [should] fully prevent discrimination, improve transparency and provide market certainty—for consumers and the next generation of American innovators. Nothing less is acceptable.”

To do:
- For the next 90 days, the FCC will collect comments from stakeholders and the general public before drafting a specific order and voting on whether to set it into law. Submit comments at FCC.gov. Refer to Docket No. 17-108. Business Insider has provided instructions that let you do it (almost) in your sleep!
- Kudos to Cantwell and Murray, keep the pressure on!
• @SenatorCantwell Thanks for educating us about how the FCC is threatening internet neutrality with your website.
  • Ask Heck to make a statement supporting net neutrality

Articles:

• TechCrunch
• The Verge
• Boston Globe
• NPR
• Washington Post
7. Russian Investigation Updates

A. Jared Kushner

**Summary:** Jared Kushner and Russia’s ambassador to Washington discussed the possibility of setting up a secret and secure communications channel between Trump’s transition team and the Kremlin, using Russian diplomatic facilities in an apparent move to shield their pre-inauguration discussions from monitoring, according to U.S. officials briefed on intelligence reports.

**Talking Points:**
- Ambassador Sergey Kislyak reported to his superiors in Moscow that Kushner, son-in-law and confidant to then-President-elect Trump, made the proposal during a meeting on Dec. 1 or 2 at Trump Tower, according to intercepts of Russian communications that were reviewed by U.S. officials. Kislyak said Kushner suggested using Russian diplomatic facilities in the United States for the communications.
- The meeting also was attended by Michael Flynn, Trump’s first national security adviser.
- The investigation appears to be entering a more overtly active phase, with investigators shifting from work that has remained largely hidden from the public to conducting interviews and using a grand jury to issue subpoenas. The intensity of the probe is expected to accelerate in the coming weeks.
- *WaPo - Russian ambassador told Moscow that Kushner wanted secret communications channel with Kremlin*
- *NYT - Russian ambassador told Moscow that Kushner wanted secret communications channel with Kremlin*

B. Trump Assembling Outside Counsel

**Summary:** The Washington Post reported that Trump is seeking outside counsel to help him in the investigations into Russian interference in the election and possible collusion by his campaign and by his associates.

**Talking Points:**
- Trump is seeking a team of attorneys, with lawyers from several firms. He has hired Marc E. Kasowitz, an attorney who Kasowitz has worked for Trump for decades and represented him in divorce, real estate and Trump University cases.
- Other attorneys who have spoken to the White House and are seen as the possible members of a team of attorneys are: Robert J. Giuffra Jr.; Reid H. Weingarten; and Theodore B. Olson. Giuffra is representing Volkswagen in its emissions tests cases. Olson represented Bush in Bush v. Gore and later worked with David Boies in a case seeking to legalize gay marriage. Weingarten is a close friend of Eric Holder. Michael Cohen, Trump’s personal lawyer, will also be involved.

C. Special Counsel

**Summary:** The Trump Administration is exploring whether it can use an ethics rule to undermine the special counsel investigation.

**Talking Points:**
- The Code of Federal Regulations restricts newly hired government lawyers from investigating their prior law firm’s clients for one year after their hiring. A Trump executive order extended that period to two years. Mueller’s former law firm, WilmerHale, represents Trump’s son-in-law Jared Kushner and Paul
Manafort. Legal experts said the ethics rule can be waived by the Justice Department, which appointed Mueller. Mueller did not represent Kushner or Manafort directly at his former firm. If the Justice Department does not grant a waiver, Mueller would be barred from investigating Kushner or Manafort, diminishing the scope of the investigation.

- Even if the Justice Department grants a waiver, Trump would consider using the ethics rule to create doubt about Mueller’s ability to do his job fairly. Administration legal advisers have been asked to determine if there is a basis for this. Under this strategy, the administration would raise the issue in press conferences and public statements. The White House has not ruled out the possibility of using the rule to challenge Mueller’s findings in court, should the investigation lead to prosecution.

Our MoCs:
- [Sen. Murray Issues Statement on Appointment of Special Counsel in Russia Investigation](#)
- [Senators Murray and Cantwell Join Call For Investigation Into Attorney General Jeff Sessions](#)
- [Cantwell Statement on Appointment of a Special Counsel to Lead FBI Russia Investigation](#)

To do:
- Thank Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell for joining with 10 other senators urging the Inspector General of the Dept. of Justice Department to investigate whether Attorney General Jeff Sessions violated his recusal from the investigation into Russia’s interference with the 2016 election when he recommended to Trump that he fire FBI Director Comey.
- Thank Senator Maria Cantwell for speaking out on CNN and for calling for an independent prosecutor to investigate Russia’s interference.
• Trump asked intelligence officials to push back against FBI probe: The Washington Post reported that after Comey told the House Intelligence Committee that there was an ongoing investigation that included a look at possible Trump campaign collusion with the Russians, Trump made appeals to the Director of National Intelligence (Daniel Coats) and the Director of National Security Agency (NSA) (Adm. Michael Rogers), urging them to publicly deny the existence of evidence of collusion during the election. Both men refused to comply with the requests, which they saw as inappropriate, according to current and former officials. Trump’s conversation with Rogers was documented contemporaneously in an internal memo written by a senior NSA official. The Post also reported that in addition to the requests to Coats and Rogers, senior White House officials sounded out top intelligence officials about the possibility of intervening directly with Comey to encourage the FBI to drop its probe of Michael Flynn.

• Russian officials discussed influencing Trump last summer: The New York Times reported that American spies collected information last summer revealing that senior Russian intelligence and political officials were discussing how to exert influence over Trump through his advisors particularly Paul Manafort and Michael Flynn. The intelligence was among the clues that American officials received last year as they began investigating Russian attempts to disrupt the election and whether any of Mr. Trump’s associates were assisting Moscow in the effort.

• Trump meeting with Russians: The New York Times and Washington Post reported that in his Oval Office meeting with the Russian foreign minister, Trump said that he had fired Comey, and that it would ease great pressure on Russia as a result. He also called Comey “crazy, a real nut job”. The report came from the official White House read-out of the meeting. On May 22, National Security Council Advisor McMaster did not deny that President Trump discussed his motivation for firing FBI Director James B. Comey in the meeting or that Trump revealed classified intelligence in the meeting.

• Flynn
  o Trump regrets firing Flynn: Politico reported that two days after firing Michael Flynn, Trump told several aides and friends that he should have kept him instead. He has continued to tell tides and associates that Flynn was a good man. One advisor has said that he has heard Trump defend Flynn using the exact worker described in reports of memos written by former FBI director Comey.
  o Michael Flynn and Congress: The New York Times reported that Michael Flynn refused to provide documents to the Senate Intelligence Committee, citing the 5th Amendment. This puts him at risk of being held in contempt of Congress, which can result in a criminal charge. It is not clear that the 5th Amendment protects against document production requests.
  o The Senate Intelligence Committee is issuing two new subpoenas for information from former national security adviser and retired Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn’s companies and challenging his lawyer’s refusal to comply with an existing subpoena for documents detailing his contacts with Russian officials, committee leaders announced Tuesday. Committee members said that a business does not have the right to the 5th Amendment protection against self-incrimination or that it extends to document production.
  o Cong. Elijah Cummings, ranking member on House Oversight, says that documents he’s reviewed suggest that Flynn lied to federal security clearance investigators. He said that he had received no income from foreign companies and had only insubstantial contact with foreign nationals. In fact, he had been paid $45,000 by Russian TV network RT to attend a gala in Moscow, sitting next to Vladimir Putin. Flynn told the investigators that the trip was funded by US companies, when the actual source of funds was RT. He also didn’t mention the $500,000 he received working for the Turkish government. Intentionally lying to federal investigators is a felony punishable by up to five years in prison. Flynn also faces legal questions over failing to properly register as a foreign agent for lobbying he did last year on behalf of Turkey while advising the Trump campaign, which is also a felony.

• Attorney General Sessions: CNN reported that Sessions did not reveal meetings with Russian when he applied for his security clearance. His staff argued that an FBI agent had told him he didn’t need to list all foreign
contacts he had as senator, though listing of all contacts for the prior seven years is required for a high-level security clearance.

**Former CIA director Brennan testimony:** In testimony before the House Intelligence Committee, former CIA director Brennan testified that he had concerns last year that Russian officials may have successfully recruited aides from the Trump campaign to help in their efforts to influence the 2016 election. He said the FBI investigation into possible coordination between the Russians and Trump campaign is well founded and necessary. He said the CIA gathers intelligence but does not investigate crimes and that he is not in a position to say whether the interactions he saw between US persons and Russia amounted to collusion.

**Paul Manafort:** Paul Manafort turned over 305 pages of documents related to the investigation of Russian hacking of the 2016 election to the House and Senate intelligence committees this week. Manafort’s submission came in response to letters the congressional panels sent in recent weeks to Trump campaign associates with potential ties to Russia. They include calendar entries, speech drafts and campaign strategy memos that mention Russia or individuals from Russia. They also cite some specific meetings, including two large group sessions that involved Russia’s ambassador to the United States; one at the Republican National Convention and the other at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington when Trump gave his first major foreign policy address.

**FinCEN:** Democrats on the Senate Intelligence Committee are concerned that the Treasury unit they have asked for information and assistance from regarding financial transaction data regarding Trump, his family, his aides and associates may be slow-walking their information requests.

**Sessions and Rosenstein:** Politico reported that Attorney General Sessions and Deputy Attorney General Ron Rosenstein discussed firing then-FBI director Comey last winter. Rosenstein testified to this fact at his briefing of the full House May 19. He stated that their interest was to restore FBI credibility, respect Department of Justice authority and to limit public statements and leaks.

**Nomination process for new FBI director:** Politico reported that Trump is seeking new candidates for FBI director. Trump is reportedly looking at women candidates.

- Justice Department Criminal Division Chief Alice Fisher withdrew from consideration, as did Trey Gowdy, next in line to head the House Oversight Committee, and Joe Lieberman. Attorney General Sessions and Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein interviewed Ken Wainstain, former US attorney and current defense attorney.
- **Trump interviewed four FBI candidates** himself on May 17. They include: Joseph Lieberman (former Connecticut senator and Democratic vice-presidential candidate); Andrew McCabe (current acting FBI director); Frank Keating (former Governor of Oklahoma, former FBI agent, US attorney and head of the American Council of Life Insurers and the American Bankers Association); Richard McFeely (former executive assistant FBI director, now working at EY, the accounting and consulting firm formerly known as Ernst and Young). Trump is also considering a few other candidates included in those listed below. They include Raymond Kelly; Judge Michael Garcia; and Alice Fisher.

**Hearings:** Former FBI director Comey has stated that he will agree to brief the Senate Intelligence Committee sometime after Memorial Day.

**House Oversight Chair** talked to Comey May 22. Chaffetz put off the scheduled May 24 hearing at which Comey was to testify to allow Comey to talk to Special Counsel Mueller.
8. Other news for our MoCs

This is the content of a letter received from Congressman Heck this past week regarding Single Payer Healthcare.

Thank you for reaching out to me about H.R. 676, the Expanded and Improved Medicare for All Act. You are one of dozens of people who have reached out to me about this bill, and it’s great to see so much energy for extending quality health insurance to all those who call this country home. As you may know, I have not put my name on H.R. 676 because of several substantive concerns with the bill, and I’d like to lay out my thinking on those.

Let me say up front that I want to live in an America where everyone has access to affordable, high-quality healthcare. I wish that was the debate we were having in Congress right now. Unfortunately, many of my colleagues are set on not only repealing the Affordable Care Act (ACA), but also reversing the gains we’ve made in past decades. I’ll be the first to admit that the ACA has flaws and that Congress should be aiming to fix the law and explore ways to lower the cost of health care premiums. But the ACA was right in its original goal of getting everyone covered by affordable, quality health insurance.

After hearing President Trump on the campaign trail, I hoped he and I shared the common goal of universal coverage. It has been a huge disappointment to see Republicans in Congress and President Trump pushing the indefensible American Health Care Act (AHCA) instead, which would rip health care coverage from 24 million individuals across the nation, force seniors and middle class families to pay more for less coverage, and give tax breaks to the insurers and the wealthiest Americans. The AHCA is full of terrible ideas, and the ill-conceived, back-room deals made to gain Republican support only make it worse. Like you, I want to improve coverage and lower costs, and if we are to make any progress we must first defeat the effort to repeal the Affordable Care Act.

I’m fortunate to represent open-minded Washingtonians who are ready to look at new ways we could realize our long-sought goal of getting everybody covered by quality health insurance. You offered H.R. 676, the Expanded and Improved Medicare for All Act, as a potential solution. This bill would establish a universal health insurance program in which health care is privately delivered and publicly financed. The new program would be called Medicare, just like the current single-payer health insurance program which serves predominately seniors, but also the disabled and those with kidney failure. However, the new program would extend to all United States residents and be far more extensive by eliminating all co-pays, deductibles, and other cost sharing requirements, and by expanding Medicare to include dental, vision, and other benefits not currently covered under Medicare.

In the shift to a Medicare for All system, millions of Americans would have their current health insurance policies terminated. Millions of these individuals—notably the more than 18 million seniors nationwide who rely on Medicare Advantage (400,000 in Washington state alone) and the more than 156 million Americans who gain coverage through their employer—are quite happy with their current insurance policies. I am seriously concerned about the prospect of canceling tens of thousands of individuals’ insurance policies, even if those affected were provided with a comparable alternative.

Additionally, I fear that this bill would strip coverage from certain groups to which our nation has a special obligation. These groups include the Native American tribes and nations with whom our history demands we treat better, our veterans who have made great sacrifices for our country, and our servicemembers—including those in our community at Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM)—who bravely serve our nation in uniform. Over
time our nation has enshrined its commitment to these groups by building specialized health systems—including the Indian Health Service (IHS), the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), and TRICARE—to address these groups’ specific health needs. For example, the Indian Health Service extends specialized, culturally-competent care to the rural corners of Indian Country. Similarly, the Veterans Health Administration and TRICARE are well-equipped to provide specialized care for combat injuries and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

These specialized systems would be wiped out or radically altered under H.R. 676. The IHS would be terminated after 5 years, and the bill does not address what would happen to the 46 hospitals, 344 health centers, 10 youth regional treatment centers, 105 health stations, 150 Alaska village clinics operated by IHS. After a ten year review, H.R. 676 may also terminate the VHA. Moreover, it concerns me that H.R. 676 is silent about how it would treat TRICARE beneficiaries and the network of military hospitals (like Madigan Army Hospital on JBLM) and clinics. These are significant flaws in the legislation that cannot be responsibly waved away or ignored.

I also think we need to acknowledge some of the smaller challenges this bill poses. For example, H.R. 676 would cause profound shifts in the health care economy. All health insurers would close down and lay off all of their employees. All for-profit health care providers—this includes 20% of hospitals and 60% of nursing homes—would have to close or be taken over. Hundreds of thousands of people—most of whom have played by the rules and trained for a lifelong career—would see their industry collapse around them and potentially wind up unemployed. This bill is silent on what would happen to these workers and their families.

I also have questions about how this ambitious plan would be funded. Under H.R. 676, the federal government would cover the cost of nearly all health care services rendered in the United States, which means a multi-trillion dollar increase in our federal budget. Even in a world where Medicare for All eliminated almost all of the administrative costs (around 5-8% of health care costs), reduced prices on prescription drugs (around 15% of health care costs), and achieved more cost savings (perhaps by paying doctors and nurses less), we would either need to significantly raise taxes or run a huge, permanent budget deficit. Adding these new expenditures is going to cause significant changes in the way our country raises and spends revenue, and we need to understand these implications much better than what is laid out in the bill as currently written.

One of the inconvenient truths in Congress is that there are always winners and losers in any large policy shift. Many of my colleagues in Congress and our President tend to bury discussion of tough policy choices in broad, sweeping statements that fail to acknowledge these hard tradeoffs. As the elected representative of Washington’s 10th Congressional District, I have the responsibility to pause and intensely scrutinize these tradeoffs. I believe in doing this for every legislative proposal that comes before my desk, including H.R. 676. I will continue to watch this bill, see if any substantive changes are made by the authors, and study how else we can best leverage the progress made in recent years to extend quality, affordable coverage to more people.

As we continue to discuss how to achieve our shared goal of universal health care coverage, let us be clear-eyed and resolved in our approach. The road ahead will be difficult, and progress may come slower than we want it to. But I take heart in the energy I am seeing from my district and across the nation, and I hope you will stay engaged in the conversation about how to move our country’s health care system forward.

Thank you for taking the time to hear me out, and I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

Denny Heck, Member of Congress
• Kudos to our MoCs via Twitter
  
  o Senator Patty Murray
    ▪ (Education) @Patty Murray Thank you for introducing legislation to make college more affordable for low-income students. Senator Murray Introduces Major Legislation to Make College More Affordable for Low-Income Students and Secure Pell Grant Program
    ▪ (Protecting LGBTQ Rights) @Patty Murray Thanks for introducing a bill to end anti-LGBTQ credit thru the Freedom from Discrimination in Credit Act. Senator Murray Introduces Bill to End Anti-LGBTQ Credit Discrimination
    ▪ (Environment) @PattyMurray Thanks for co-sponsoring S Res 155 – the US must exercise global leadership in tackling climate change.
    ▪ (Environment) @PattyMurray Thanks for voting to uphold the Obama-era rule that forces energy companies to capture methane.
    ▪ (Environment) @PattyMurray Thanks for your continuing efforts to fight any challenge to the Hanford Reach National Monument.
    ▪ (Environment) @PattyMurray Thanks for urging Trump to make cleanup at Hanford a priority.
    ▪ (Protecting Working People) @PattyMurray Thanks for questioning Trump’s profiting from the retirement plans of working Americans.
  
  o Senator Maria Cantwell
    ▪ (Internet Neutrality) @SenatorCantwell Thanks for educating us about how the FCC is threatening internet neutrality with your website.
    ▪ (Environment, National Monuments, Public Lands) @SenatorCantwell Thanks for voting to uphold the Obama-era rule that forces energy companies to capture methane.
    ▪ (Environment, National Monuments, Public Lands) @SenatorCantwell Thanks for urging Trump to make cleanup at Hanford a priority.
    ▪ (Environment, National Monuments, Public Lands) @SenatorCantwell Thanks for pledging to fight any challenge to the Hanford Reach National Monument.
    ▪ (Environment, National Monuments, Public Lands) @SenatorCantwell Thanks for speaking out against the confirmation of David Bernhardt at Dept of the Interior.
9. Other Topics

Voting rights

The New York Times reported that the Supreme Court ruled 5-3 that North Carolina legislators had violated the Constitution by relying too heavily on race in drawing two congressional districts. The court rejected arguments from state lawmakers that their purpose in drawing the maps was not racial discrimination but partisan advantage. The decision found that race could be the predominant issue in redistricting even if legislators had mixed motives. Last week, The court declined to hear an appeal of a decision that had struck down parts of a restrictive North Carolina voting law that, among other things, tightened voter identification requirements and cut back on early voting.

Climate change

The Washington Post reported that a new scientific analysis has found that the rate of sea level rise has nearly tripled since 1990. This is one of the strongest indications yet that a much feared trend of the acceleration of sea level rise is now underway. Before 1990, oceans were rising about 1.1 mm a year (.43 inches a decade). From 1993 through 2012, they rose 3.1 mm a year, (1.22 inches a decade). The cause is that sea level rise throughout much of the 20th century was driven by the melting of land-based glaciers and the expansion of seawater as it warms, but sea level rise in the 21st century has now also added in major contributions from the ice sheets of Greenland and Antarctica.

House tax plan

Paul Ryan has continued to support a massive tax on imports (a border adjustment tax) as a major source of revenue in the House tax plan. Trump opposes the tax, and Treasury Secretary has publicly come out against it this week. Exporters like the tax, importers, such as retailers, strongly oppose it.

Immigration

The 4th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in a 10-3 decision that the freeze on Trump’s revised travel ban should remain in place. The entire appeals court heard the appeal, rather than the usual 3-judge panel. The court said that the presidential broad power to deny entry into the US is not absolute. They said that the ban discriminated on the basis of religion. The case is likely to be appealed to the Supreme Court.
Senate Republicans likely to change custom that allows Democrats to block judicial choices

WaPo - Senate Republicans likely to change custom that allows Democrats to block judicial choices

- Senate Republicans are threatening to change a custom that allows Democratic senators to block some judicial choices from their states, in an effort to speed along a conservative transformation of the federal judiciary.
- Leaders are considering a change to the Senate’s “blue slip” practice, which holds that judicial nominations will not proceed unless the nominee’s home-state senators signal their consent to the Senate Judiciary Committee. Republicans say they will make the change if Democrats throw up blanket opposition to President Trump’s nominees.
- Conservative groups have urged McConnell and Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Charles E. Grassley (R-Iowa) to loosen the blue-slip rules — especially on nominees to regional appellate courts — and Republicans have warned Democrats that uncompromising opposition to Trump’s nominees could trigger a change.
- Democrats say that would be a substantial reworking of the rules and inconsistent with Grassley’s pledge to retain the blue-slip process no matter which party captured the White House last year.
- Now, liberal groups that denounced Republican stalling over Obama nominees — his picks languished longer before action than did President George W. Bush’s — are urging Democratic senators to use blue slips to block Trump nominees. Conservative groups until recently defended the process as time-honored.
- Russell Wheeler, a Brookings Institution scholar who follows judicial nominations, said allegiance is situational. “All of a sudden, Republicans are discovering the blue-slip process can be abused, when in fact they’ve been abusing them to get all of these vacancies for Trump to fill,” he said.