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Research Report: July 29, 2017

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Russian interference with the election

Summary

There is active discussion in the White House of firing Sessions to appoint a new attorney general who could fire Robert Mueller. Sessions discussed campaign issues with Russian Ambassador last summer. Congress passed Russia sanctions bills with overwhelming margins. Sessions will launch leak investigations. Senate and House committees continue to interview witnesses.

Talking points

- There is active discussion in the White House about firing Attorney General Sessions in order to make a recess appointment of an acting attorney general who could fire Robert Mueller and end the FBI investigation into the Russian hacking of the election and possible collusion. Republican senators are making clear that they will strongly oppose the move. There are efforts to prevent the Senate from going into recess to prevent a recess appointment. Meanwhile, Trump has kept up daily attacks on Sessions as well as on the Acting FBI director.
- Both Houses of Congress have passed legislation to ensure that a president cannot end or weaken sanctions on Russia, Iran or North Korea without Congress having the ability to prevent those actions. The bills passed overwhelmingly and could withstand a veto.
- Sessions is launching investigations into leaks of intelligence information, possibly in reaction to Trump attacks.
- The Senate and House Intelligence committees are continuing to interview witnesses, including Jared Kushner and Paul Manafort.

Our Members of Congress

Both senators called for a special prosecutor to be appointed by the Justice Department, and praised appointment of Robert Mueller to that post. Senator Cantwell released a statement after the Comey testimony that ended “We have to make sure that the White House is not trying to obstruct the investigation. No one is above the law, not even the president.” 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

- Urge our members and concerned Republicans to oppose Trump efforts to fire Sessions (despite our opposition to his policies) in order to fire special counsel Robert Mueller and oppose all efforts by Trump, his legal team and conservative media to limit, end or delegitimize that Mueller’s investigation.
- Urge moderate and concerned Republicans (including Senate Intelligence Chairman Burr, John McCain, Susan Collins, Lindsay Graham, Lisa Murkowski, and possibly

Ben Sasse and Jeff Flake) to continue to support the congressional and special counsel investigations into Russian hacking and possible Trump campaign collusion.

- Thank members for pushing for the Russia sanctions bill. Thank Cong. Heck for speaking out publicly on this legislation. Ask them to be willing to override a Trump veto of this bill if necessary.
- Continue to ask our senators to push for an independent commission with subpoena power. Thank Cong. Heck for doing so. Only an independent commission can conduct an independent investigation that can also share facts with the public.
- Encourage our senators to continue to support an aggressive Senate Intelligence Committee investigation. Encourage Cong. Heck to continue to push for an aggressive House 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.
- Thank our members of Congress for continuing to stand up for democratic accountability and public transparency in this investigation.

H.J. Res. 113 – Constitutional Amendment to Overturn Citizens United

Summary

- Amendment to overturn the 2010 Supreme Court Citizens United decision allowing corporations to spend unlimited funds to run campaign advertisements.
- Introduced by Rep. Adam Schiff on 07/20/2017 and referred to the House Committee on the Judiciary.
- The bill has 16 Democratic sponsors.
- In 2012 Schiff introduced an identical bill H.J.R. 111 which was referred to the House Judiciary and then referred to the Subcommittee on the Constitution.
- Would not restrict the ability of Congress or States to propose reasonable limitation on campaign contributions
- Would allow, but not require Congress or States to provide public financing of campaigns

[Schiff Press Release](#), [LA Times](#)

To do

- Contact House Judiciary Committee Phone: 202-225-3951 Chair Bob Goodlatte phone: 202-225-5431, fax: 202-225-9681 and Ranking Member John Conyers Jr Phone: (202) 225-5126, Fax: (202) 225-0072
- Ask Denny Heck to cosponsor H.J.R. 113.

Scripts

- Chair or Ranking Member of Subcommittee: I am contacting you in your role as (Chair or Ranking Member) of the House Judiciary to express support for H.J.R. 113. Overturning Citizens United is essential to maintaining our democracy.
- Rep Denny Heck, please cosponsor Adam Schiff's bill H.J.R.113 to overturn Citizens United.

S.1460 - Energy and Natural Resources Act of 2017

Summary

- This bill was introduced on June 29, 2017 by Senators Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Maria Cantwell (D-WA). This bill is nearly 900 pages. It amends a number of acts and initiates other programs. There is no summary of the bill as of 7/27/2017

Talking Points

- The bill is the successor to their broad, bipartisan legislation from the previous Congress and was placed directly on the Senate Calendar for expedited floor consideration. The previous bill did not pass because the two versions could not be reconciled.
- If Republicans fail to pass a health care bill, Democratic aides and outside groups said McConnell may bring up the energy bill before the Senate next week to show the Senate can move quickly and approve bipartisan legislation.
- This bill promotes fossil fuel extraction, and does not responsibly support renewables; it will thereby exacerbate climate change.
- Three hundred and fifty organizations have come out against this bill. Their assessment is that it is similar to the Energy Modernization of Act of 2015, which did not pass in the last Congress.
- Bernie Sanders has stated opposition to this bill
- The bill provides expedited review of fracked gas export terminals, requiring a decision on such proposals within just 45 days of an environmental review. This will encourage more fracking, and create front-line sacrifice zones for the sake of overseas gas export and profit.
- The bill will make the pro-industry Federal Energy Regulatory Commission the lead decision maker in authorizing all new interstate fracked gas infrastructure projects
- The bill instructs the Bureau of Land Management to create a pilot program for expediting drilling and fracking permits.
- The bill allocates millions of dollars for discovery, development and extraction of methane hydrate deposit in U.S. coastal waters.
- Renewable energy initiatives are directed at hydroelectric, which has problems associated with dams, habitat loss, and disrupting fish passage. Wind and solar are not included as initiatives.
- This bill will act in concert with previous Trump administration rollbacks, such as the pullout of the Paris Accords and the dismantling of the clean power plan to increase CO₂, other pollutants, and the risks associated with climate change and air pollution.

To do

- Call Senator Cantwell and ask her to rescind her support for the bill. Ask her to craft a different bill, moving away from fossil fuels and investing in renewable energy and technology.

Resources/Articles

- [The Bill](#)
- [Energy Committee press release](#),
- [Sanders moves against energy bill](#),
- [Letter of opposition from 350 organizations](#),
- [EcoWatch article](#): Does Cantwell stand with the environment or with Trump?

Border Wall Funding

Summary

This week the house passed a spending bill that includes \$1.6 billion for Trump's "border wall".

Talking Points

The border wall is estimated to cost in total somewhere between 20 and 80 billion dollars.

The US population of undocumented immigrants has been shrinking every year since 2008.

A border wall will not be an effective measure to stop undocumented immigration

The border wall is an ineffective solution to a problem that doesn't exist. It is part of a larger xenophobic, immoral, and unconstitutional push to demonize immigrants and people of color

Our Members of Congress

- Patty Murray has opposed funding the border wall at the expense of other DHS programs ([Murray press release](#))
 - No statements from Cantwell
 - Heck voted against the bill <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2017/roll435.xml>

To Do

Call Murray and Cantwell and ask them to oppose any spending bill that funds building the border wall. Tell them you expect them to stay strong up to and including allowing the government to shut down.

Thank Heck for opposing the bill

Articles

[New York Times](#), [The Atlantic](#), [New York Times](#)

Other potential action items

- 1) [Defend DACA and Support the Durbin-Graham DREAM Act \(S. 1615\)](#)
- 2) [Don't support funds for Trump's border wall](#)
- 3) [Stop the criminalization of boycotts](#): Israel Anti-Boycott Act (S.720/H.R. 1697), to amend existing international business laws to make it a felony for Americans to support the UN resolution or to cooperate with any other international efforts to boycott Israel. While the Israel-Palestine conflict is an ongoing, complicated matter, **this bill goes a step too far and criminalizes the ability of an American to protest.**
- 4) [Repeal the 2001 Authorization to use military force](#), [CNN article](#), [Think Progress article](#)
- 5) [Keep religious organizations out of politics \(protect the Johnson Amendment\)](#)
- 6) [Maintain funding for teen pregnancy prevention programs](#)
- 7) [Demand Congress fund the fight against the opioid crisis](#)
- 8) [Tillerson shuts State Department War Crimes Office](#)
- 9) Sessions expands DOJ's asset seizures program: [The Hill](#), [WaPo](#), [NPR](#), [Standard Republic](#)
- 10) Trump's National Labor Review Board appointments: [Mother Jones](#), [Common Dreams](#), [SF Chronicle](#), [The American Prospect](#)
- 11) Protest H.R.2936 - Resilient Federal Forests Act of 2017; [Pamplin Media](#), [Pacific Standard](#), [Gear Junkie](#)