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The Trump Administration continues to take steps to jeopardize the ACA:

- While they did pay cost-sharing subsidies this month, they did not commit to making such payments in future months. Their statements and (non)-actions have led some insurers to pull out of Exchange markets and others to raise premiums by 20% or more. One researcher estimates that premium hikes may average 29% in 2018, largely due to the Administration’s actions (and inaction).

- Outreach and marketing efforts are key to strong Exchange enrollment. The Administration has terminated a couple of key public engagement contracts and refuses to say whether they will continue funding for 2018 outreach efforts.

However, . . . on the plus side this week:

- The number of counties without an Exchange plan for 2018 shrank to . . . zero! Thanks to efforts by state Insurance Commissioners and health insurers, every county in the country will have at least one plan in 2018.

- Our very own Senator Murray, along with the health committee chair, Lamar Alexander, are trying to craft a bipartisan but limited bill aimed at supporting the ACA, in part by continuing cost-sharing reductions. A Sept. 6 hearing will feature state insurance commissioners. The next day’s witnesses will be governors from both parties. The previous week, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office issued a finding that cutting off cost-sharing reductions would cause premiums and the federal deficit to rise 20 percent in 2018 and 25 percent by 2025 as insurance plans would raise their premiums to offset the lost funding. However, eliminating the cost subsidies would also require the federal government to spend more on premium subsidy tax credits. Instead of saving money, eliminating cost subsidies would cost the government $194 billion more over the next decade.

- Senator Brian Schatz of Hawaii has a new proposal that would allow more people the ability to enroll in Medicaid by giving states the option to offer a “buy-in” to the Medicaid program as an option on the ACA exchanges. Under his proposal, individuals would be eligible to receive ACA tax credits to reduce the premium costs of the buy-in. The bill would also raise Medicaid’s payment rates to doctors and hospitals to match Medicare rates. (Currently, Medicaid prices are 72% of those under Medicare), which itself pays less than private insurers.

**ACTION:** Call and/or fax Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell and thank them for their tireless work on behalf of us, their constituents. Thank Patty Murray for working with Senator Alexander and the Senate HELP committee to move legislation to support the insurance markets. Your calls really matter to them!
- Senator Patty Murray Phone: (253) 572-3636
- Senator Maria Cantrell Phone: (253) 572-2281

It *appears* that a majority of the members of the Senate HELP committee, including those listed below, *may* support Murray’s and Alexander’s bipartisanship. If you have time, contact these members to urge they support Committee leadership’s efforts to stabilize the insurance markets:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Republicans</th>
<th>Democrats</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Lamar Alexander, Tennessee, Chair (202) 224-4944</td>
<td>- Patty Murray, Washington, Ranking Member (253) 572-3636</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Susan Collins, Maine (202) 224-2523</td>
<td>- Bob Casey Jr., Pennsylvania (202) 224-6324</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Lisa Murkowski, Alaska (202) 224-6665</td>
<td>- Al Franken, Minnesota (202) 224-5641</td>
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<td>- Michael Bennet, Colorado (202) 224-5852</td>
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<td>- Sheldon Whitehouse, Rhode Island (202) 224-2921</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Tammy Baldwin, Wisconsin (202) 224-5653</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Chris Murphy, Connecticut (202) 224-4041</td>
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<td>- Elizabeth Warren, Massachusetts (202) 224-4543</td>
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<td>- Tim Kaine, Virginia (202) 224-4024</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Maggie Hassan, New Hampshire (202) 224-3324</td>
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<td>- Bernie Sanders, Vermont (202) 224-5141</td>
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**Russian interference with the election**

**Summary**
Trump Russia dossier owner faced Senate Judiciary Committee. Congressional investigators find another Russia meeting email.

**Talking points**
- Glenn Simpson of Fusion GPS testified to the Senate Judiciary Committee August 22. He commissioned the Christopher Steele dossier on Trump, originally for a Republican candidate and then for Hillary Clinton. He testified for ten hours. Simpson also handed over 40,000 pages of documents.
- It was believed that Chair Grassley wanted to use the session to argue that the real foreign scandal is not Russia’s attack on the election and possible Trump campaign collusion, but the dossier and Hillary’s involvement in it. Simpson’s lawyer said they hope the testimony will be made public.
- Leaders of the committee have tried to get Donald Jr. and Paul Manafort to testify, but no interviews have taken place.
- Congressional investigators have found another email from a top Trump campaign aide about a Russia meeting. Rick Dearborn, now deputy chief of staff, sent an email to other campaign officials about a person trying to connect them with Putin. It is unclear whether any further effort happened to set up a meeting. There is speculation this email, like the approach to Donald Jr. to meet in June 2016, were efforts by Russian intelligence to see if members of the Trump campaign would be receptive to Russian help in targeting Hillary Clinton.
- Lawyers for Robert Mueller have issued subpoenas to a number of prominent DC lobbying firms as the investigation examines the finances of Michael Flynn and Paul Manafort. Two of the subpoenas went to Mercury Public Affairs and to SGR LLC while a small number of other lobbying firms that did similar work also received subpoenas. The investigators asked Mercury for information about their public relations work for Manafort for a Brussels-based group pushing for better relations between Ukraine and Europe for Ukraine’s then Russian-supported government. SGR worked with Flynn for a Dutch company with ties to the Turkish president.

**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 called for an independent commission for some months and signed a discharge petition to move HR 356 (which would establish a commission) to the House floor.
- Our senators stood with other senators to push the Senate to not fully recess to prevent a Trump recess appointment of a new attorney general who could fire Robert Mueller.
To do

- Thank our members for opposing Trump efforts to fire Attorney General 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 deligitimize that Mueller’s investigation.

- Urge moderate and concerned Republicans (including Senate Intelligence Chairman Burr, John McCain, Susan Collins, Lindsay Graham and Lisa Murkowski) to continue to support the congressional and special counsel investigations into Russian hacking and possible Trump campaign collusion.

- Thank our members for pushing for the Russia sanctions bill. Thank Congressman Heck for speaking out publicly on this legislation.

- 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 Congressman 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.
Trump disbands climate change advisory committee

Summary
The Trump Administration has decided to disband the federal advisory panel for the National Climate Assessment. It was established to helping government and business incorporate the federal climate analysis into their planning.

Talking points
- The Trump Administration has decided to disband the 15-person federal advisory panel for the National Climate Assessment, a group aimed at helping policymakers and private sector officials incorporate the government’s climate analysis into long-term planning.
- The assessment is supposed to come out every four years. The next one, due out in 2018, is already controversial, with scientists releasing their draft of the climate science report (key to the larger document) early to prevent it from being buried by the Administration.
- The committee was established to help translate findings from the National Climate Assessment into concrete guidance for both public and private-sector officials.
- Many state and local officials have pressed the federal government for more concrete guidance on how to factor climate change into future infrastructure. The Administration has moved in the opposite direction.

Our MoCs
- None of our members have specifically commented on the administration’s disbanding of the committee.
- All of them are supportive of efforts to combat and adapt to climate change.
- Senator Cantwell has focused on this issue in the Senate.
- Denny Heck just held a local town hall/panel session in Lacey on climate change in the last few days.

To do
- Thank our members, especially Senator Cantwell and Cong. Heck for their leadership in responding to the challenge of climate change and their opposition to the disastrous moves of the Trump Administration on the issue.
- Urge our members to speak out about the Administration’s disbanding of the Climate Change Advisory Committee. As we feel the effects of climate change and can forsee future impacts, state and local governments and businesses will need to plan over the coming years to deal with what we can forsee: higher sea levels, hotter summers and more forest fires, less predictable weather, more disease outbreaks.
- Use their positions to speak out on the dangers of climate change and the need for our local and state governments and businesses to plan for them and to work to try to limit the danger they pose, both by reducing emissions, increasing energy efficiency, and working to adapt to those damaging changes we know we cannot prevent.
Afghanistan

Summary

- On Monday, August 21, President Trump gave a nationally televised speech “outlining” his “strategy” for the continued war in Afghanistan. The speech was short on detail and heavy on cliches.
- He rejected to provide a timeline or talk about troop numbers, claiming that would aid the enemy.
- He defined victory as, “attacking our enemies, obliterating ISIS, crushing al Qaeda, preventing the Taliban from taking over Afghanistan, and stopping mass terror attacks against America before they emerge.”
- The Pentagon has indicated that up 5000 more troops may be deployed to Afghanistan. Currently, the Pentagon says there is 8400 American troops on permanent assignment in the country although there is an additional 4600 or so on “temporary assignment.”

Talking Points

- This small troop surge is unlikely to win the war or defeat the Taliban. The Obama troop surge brought levels to 100,000, this will bring it 16,000.
- There are no good solutions in Afghanistan, this is basically a stop-gap measure to prevent us from outright losing and prolonging the war.
- This a reversal of Trump’s promise to pull us out of Afghanistan.

Our MoCs

- No comments from any MOC

To do

- Are we anti-war? Are we interventionists? Do we feel the US has a responsibility not to leave Afghanistan in chaos? We could be opposed because we want a massive troop surge or we could be opposed because we want out. Maybe we should poll the membership? Regardless this is not going to be a situation where our MOCs have much leverage unless there is national organizing for a showdown over funding the war. MOCs never want to oppose military funding because they will get slammed for “not supporting our troops.”
Stop the rollback of ACA birth control coverage

Summary
The Trump administration has drafted a sweeping revision of the government’s contraception coverage mandate that could deny birth control benefits to hundreds of thousands of women who now receive them at no cost under the Affordable Care Act. When this rule is published by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the exemptions will immediately go into effect.

Talking Points
- Since 2011 the ACA has required that female contraception must be covered by insurers without a co-pay.
- This “contraceptive mandate” has extended affordable birth control to millions of Americans.
- Today 55 million Americans benefit from coverage of preventive services, including birth control, saving Americans billions of dollars per year.
- The existing mandate gives exemptions to certain organizations that object to birth control for religious reasons, including houses of worship, certain religiously affiliated hospitals and universities, and ‘closely held’ private companies (recall the ‘Hobby Lobby’ Supreme Court case of 2014).
- Despite these accommodations, the Trump Administration is pushing further exemptions to the contraceptive mandate. The new rule makes the exemption available to *all* employers, including large, publicly-traded, for-profit companies, on the basis of religious beliefs or “moral convictions.” It makes the mandate optional for religiously affiliated organizations, and it creates an exemption for health insurance companies that have religious or moral objections to providing birth control.

Our MoCs
Per her staff, Senator Cantwell has reached out to HHS expressed her concern and is working this issue. She had no suggestions for us other than calling Tom Price to object.

To do
- Call Department of Health and Human Services, Tom Price comment line 202-205-5445
  o Your script: Hi, my name is [NAME] and I’m calling from Olympia. I’d like to leave a message for Secretary Price. I’m calling to express my objection to any change in the contraceptive mandate in the Affordable Care Act. Adding more exemptions to the contraception mandate will erode access to preventative healthcare for millions of Americans. I ask the plan to publish this new rule be abandoned, or at the very least, allow for a period of public comment.
- Or Postcard to: HHS, 200 Independence Avenue, S.W. Washington, D.C. 20201
Protect Voting Rights with 2020 Census Funding

Summary
- The information gathered during the 2020 Census will be used to inform state redistricting efforts, allocate seats within the House of Representatives, and provide demographic information to inform policy decisions at all levels of government.
- However, the House and Senate Appropriations Committees have not provided sufficient funds to adequately prepare for the 2020 Census. The 2018 Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations bills (H.R.3267 / S.1662) have passed both House and Senate Committees with insufficient funding levels for the Census Bureau (about $300 million below requested amount). They now go to the full chambers for further debate and votes.

Talking Points
- An accurate census count is essential to ensure traditionally under-counted groups, like Latino, Black, low-income, and non-English-speaking households, are adequately documented.
- The Census Bureau reported missing 2.1% of Black Americans and 1.5% of Latinx Americans in its 2010 count, while over-counting non-Latinx White Americans by 0.84%.
- Without robust and accurate data, the 2020 Census could be used to weaken the voting power of voters of color via partisan gerrymandering and systematically under-fund jurisdictions with larger proportions of non-White residents.
- A well-supported and well-funded 2020 Census is critical to the integrity of our democracy.

To do
  - Script: Hi, my name is ________________ and I am a constituent of Rep. Heck [or Sen. Cantwell or Sen. Murray] from Olympia. I’m calling today because I’m very concerned about the lack of adequate funding for the 2020 Census Bureau. I ask that Rep. Heck [or Sen. Cantwell or Sen. Murray] work to pass a 2018 spending bill that gives the Census Bureau its request funding levels so that it can ensure a fair and accurate 2020 Census. Thank you for your time and attention. [NOTE: If leaving a message, please also leave your full street address in order to ensure that your call is tallied.]
Other Issues

International

Talk of “preventive war” over North Korea: The New York Times reported that there is active discussion by Trump’s military and national security team about the possibility of “preventive war” against North Korea if efforts at diplomacy fail. This has not seemed credible in the past, given the North’s ability to strike Seoul, a city ten million people, with thousands of conventional artillery rounds and its ability to attack Japan. This is not to mention the extreme difficulty of hitting all of North Korea’s nuclear weapon, missile and nuclear production capacity, which are deep underground, hidden or on mobile launchers. It is unclear if this is serious or intended to focus North Korea on diplomatic options. Trump’s team does believe that North Korea cannot be deterred from using weapons in the way that the US and Russia did during the Cold War.

US imposes sanctions on Chinese and Russian companies doing business with North Korea: The Washington Post reported that the Treasury Department placed sanctions on Chinese and Russian individuals and firms that did business with North Korea in ways that advanced its missile and nuclear weapons programs. The sanctions against ten companies and six individuals are designed to disrupt the economic ties that have allowed North Korea to continue funding its missile and nuclear weapons programs despite strict UN sanctions prohibiting it.

US sanctions, even though they are imposed by just one country, have an outsize influence because most international banking is conducted in US dollars. The measures prohibit US citizens and companies from doing business with the sanctioned companies.

The sanctions hit three types of business dealings that provide a window into how North Korea uses companies in other countries to evade sanctions. China-based Dandong Rich Earth Trading Co. was sanctioned for buying vanadium ore from a company tied to North Korea’s atomic energy agency. The Russian firm Gefest-M procured metals for a North Korean mining company with a Moscow office. The Chinese company Mingzheng International Trading was accused of facilitating dollar transactions on behalf of North Korea’s proliferation network.

The US also sanctioned three Chinese coal companies for importing North Korean coal, which generates more than $1 billion a year for North Korea. Three Russians were sanctioned for helping North Korea purchase fuel oil. The Treasury Department also sanctioned Mansudae Overseas Projects for helping North Korean laborers work abroad.

Civil rights

Charlottesville votes on statue action: The Washington Post reported that the Charlottesville City Council voted unanimously to shroud the statues of Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson in black. The city’s effort to move the statues has been halted in court.

Poll shows public disapproval of Trump reaction to Charlottesville events: The Washington Post reported that the Washington Post-ABC News poll reported that 56% of respondents disapproved of Trump’s response to Charlottesville while only 28% approved. Among Democrats, 84% disapproved and 6% approved. Among independents, 55% disapproved and 28% approved. But among Republicans, 62% approved while only 19% disapproved. A total of
42% said Trump put white supremacists on equal footing with their opponents, 35% disagreed, while 23% had no opinion.

The poll found that 1 in 6 Americans either support the alt-right or say it is acceptable to hold white supremacist or neo-Nazi views. There is a significant minority of the Republican party and of Trump’s base that do not see white supremacists as beyond the pale.

The poll demonstrates that while Americans as a whole disagree with Trump on his handling of Charlottesville by 2-to-1, Trump’s base remains largely supportive of his actions. It also suggests that many Americans are still not focused on these issues. It also makes clear that independents are breaking away from Trump on this issue by large margins and that Democrats are overwhelming in their opposition to his actions.

The poll was conducted August 16 to 20 among a random national sample of 1,014 adults reached on cellular and landline phones. The margin of sampling error for overall results is plus or minus 3.5 percentage points.

**Trump’s Phoenix speech:** One day after making a speech on Afghanistan policy that sounded presidential (even though the proposed policy itself is not likely to succeed), Trump gave an campaign rally speech in Phoenix (nearly three and a half years before the next presidential election), that was anything but. The speech was seventy-five minutes long.

Trump recapped his responses to Charlottesville, arguing that he had been fair in his comments. He left out any mention of his claim that “both sides” were to blame and that “there were many good people on both sides”. Those statements, that suggested that there was moral equivalence between neo-Nazis, KKK and white supremacists on one side and those protesting them on the other, were what caused the public uproar about his comments.

Trump attacked the news media at length, blaming them for divisions in the country. He attacked Jeff Flake and John McCain, sitting Republican senators from Arizona. He also implied that he would be issuing a pardon for ex-sheriff Joe Arpaio, who a judge had found guilty of contempt of court for racial profiling after being ordered to stop. He also threatened a government shutdown if he didn’t get funding for a border wall. He announced that he will probably get rid of NAFTA. Hundreds of people in the crowd left early (after waiting for hours in 107 degree heat and having their water bottles confiscated). Thousands of protestors demonstrated outside the hall, though there was no violence.

**Taxes**

Republican leaders want to release tax plan details next month: Politico reported that Republican leaders of the House, Senate and White House economic leaders (known as the “Big Six”) want to release more tax plan details next month, but want support from key congressional Republicans. The tax draft is being put together by Paul Ryan, Mitch McConnell, Orrin Hatch (chair of Senate Finance), Kevin Brady (chair of House Ways and Means), Steven Mnuchin (Treasury Secretary) and Gary Cohn (director of the National Economic Council). The leaders plan to give the Republican members of the House Ways and Means Committee and Senate Finance Committee a preview of what they’ve been working on behind closed doors before any public rollout.
The plan will include a “foreign minimum tax” which could be used as a funding source for tax reform, as a replacement for Ryan’s proposed border adjustment tax. The group has not yet determined how much to propose cutting the corporate tax rate. The Trump Administration wants a big cut, while Ways and Means chair Brady wants an emphasis on expanding business investment write-offs. Senate Finance Chair Hatch is pushing a plan to cut the effective tax rates paid by corporations by shifting part of their tax burden to shareholders.

Budget
Trump’s border wall demand could upend congressional negotiations: On August 22, Trump threatened a government shutdown if funding for his proposed border wall is not included in the budget. Currently, no budget is likely to pass either house of Congress without Democratic votes, because the House Freedom Caucus and senators with similar views will not vote for a budget without draconian budget cuts, which most Republicans will not support. But Democrats will not provide votes for a budget that includes border wall funding. They argue that Trump will be at fault if there is a government shutdown. Paul Ryan told reporters at a tax policy event in Oregon August 23 that Congress will likely pass a continuing resolution (a stopgap extension of current funding) in the coming weeks. Current spending authority expires at the end of September. Rasmussen Reports, a conservative-leaning pollster, conducted an automated poll of likely voters in July and found only 37% supporting a border wall “to help stop illegal immigration” while 56% opposed it. A Pew poll from February found 35% support to 62% opposition. House Republicans vote to provide $1.6 billion in seed funding for a border wall as part of a larger spending bill. That bill is not expected to be taken up in the Senate.

Senate relationship with Trump
McConnell-Trump relationship deteriorates: The New York Times reported that Trump and Mitch McConnell have not spoken to each other in weeks. This followed a shouting phone call between the two in which Trump both attacked McConnell for failing to pass ACA repeal and what he suggested was his refusal to protect him from Russia investigations. McConnell, in private, has expressed uncertainty about whether Trump can save his presidency. Trump has threatened to oppose Republican senators who oppose him while McConnell comes to their defense. McConnell has become angry at Trump’s attacks on Republican senators and his call to end the filibuster. In private, he has wondered whether Trump will be in a position to head the Republican party into the 2018 election. He told business leaders about his discomfort with Trump’s comments after Charlottesville equating white supremacists with those protesting them, and he has privately told staff he was horrified by the comments.

Trump clashed with Republican senators over Russia: Politico reported that Trump expressed frustration over Russia-related matters Republican senators. He had an angry conversation with Senator Bob Corker (Senate Foreign Relations committee chair) over the Russia sanctions bill and a conversation with Senator Thom Tillis (NC) over his bipartisan work to protect Robert Mueller from being fired by Trump. Trump was opposed to the legislation and didn’t want it to pass.
Economy
Labor groups attack Trump on the economy: The Washington Post reports that organized labor groups have stepped up attacks on Trump for failing to deliver on his economic promises. The most visible effort is a two-week tour by the Good Jobs Nation coalition that began August 21. The coalition was launched in 2013 to pressure Obama on trade and wage issues, is organizing rallies around the Midwest through Labor Day. The effort is designed to highlight the lack of economic results since January. While the economy has continued to grow, there has been little wage growth. The Administration has undone or stopped pushing regulations that would help labor or the economy. That includes one that required firms to disclose labor law violations before bidding on government contracts and one that made over four million more workers eligible for overtime pay.

Environment
More Republican legislators bucking party on climate change: Politico reported that more Republican members of Congress are bucking their party on climate change, though the change is still modest. The House Climate Solutions Caucus, a bipartisan group formed early in 2016, has more than tripled since January. In July, 46 Republicans joined Democrats to defeat an amendment to the annual defense authorization bill that would have deleted a requirement that the Defense Department prepare for the effects of climate change. Out of the 26 Republican members of the caucus, all but 5 represent districts targeted by the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) next year.

Interior Department halts study on health risks of mountaintop-removal: The New York Times reported that the Department of the Interior has ordered a halt to a $1 million scientific study of the health risks of mountaintop-removal coal mining. The study was being conducted by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine. They were being ordered to stop work because the department is conducting an agency-wide budgetary review. The study was begun because of a request from the state of West Virginia in 2016. As part of the practice of mountaintop-removal coal mining, companies dump the rubble into the surrounding valleys and streams, in many cases leading to extensive pollution, including from selenium and manganese, which can be toxic in high concentrations. The dust kicked up by explosions can also be a hazard. Such mining has occurred on at least 500 Appalachian mountains.

Ethics
Interior Secretary Zinke under investigation by Interior Inspector General: NBC reported that the Interior Department Inspector General is investigating Interior Secretary Zinke for ethics violations regarding his threat to Senator Lisa Murkowski of Alaska to cut funds for Alaska if she voted against the ACA repeal bill.
Trump brand

Trump’s Mar-a-Lago Club loses charity events after his Charlottesville comments:
The Washington Post reported that major charities announced in the past week that they were cancelling plans to hold events at Trump’s Mar-a-Lago Club in the wake of Trump’s remarks after Charlottesville equating neo-Nazis, KKK and white supremacists with those protesting them. A total of nine of the 16 galas of dinner events scheduled during next winter’s Palm Beach social season have been cancelled in the past week. The cancellations could reduce the club’s revenue by hundreds of thousands of dollars for each event. Groups cancelling included the Salvation Army, the American Red Cross, Susan G. Komen, the Preservation Foundation of Palm Beach, the Cleveland Clinic, the American Cancer Society, the American Friends of Magen David Adom (the Israeli Red Cross), the Autism Project of Palm Beach County, the Ryan Licht Sang Bipolar Foundation. The Unicorn Children’s Foundation said it is currently exploring other options for a planned luncheon.