

Research Report: October 1, 2017

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1. Republican Tax Plan

Information from Indivisible Guide

Summary: Now, the Tax fight is on. Republicans are already gearing up for the next big fight: Trump's Tax Plan (or as we like to call it on our new website, the [Trump Tax Scam](#)). This week, the White House unveiled a six-page draft of a tax scam framework, [building off their one page memo from this spring](#). Republicans are, once again, trying to ram this bill through using the budget reconciliation process just like they did with TrumpCare. This plan isn't "tax reform." It's [tax cuts for the wealthy](#).

Talking Points:

- **The first step is the budget resolution.** The House [will vote on its budget resolution](#) on Thursday and the Senate will mark up its resolution Wednesday and Thursday. Here's the bottom line: these budgets cut critical services and would force deep cuts to Medicaid, Medicare, and Social Security down the road. All to give massive tax cuts to the rich and corporations.
- **Repeal the ACA's taxes on high-income earners**
 - Since these taxes only apply to income above \$200,000, only Americans with incomes above \$200,000 will benefit". Repealing these taxes will undermine the stability of health insurance markets by jeopardizing the funding to help low-income Americans afford coverage.
- **Lower the rate on "pass through" income**
 - Many owner-operated businesses are organized such that their income is taxed through the owners' individual income taxes, and not through the corporate tax code. These businesses—which Republicans consistently characterize as "small businesses"—can range from local shops to hedge funds. In fact, nearly 70% of all pass-through income is accrued by the top 1%.
 - Currently, pass-through income is taxed at rates on the individual side of the tax code—meaning the wealthiest tax filers with pass-through income pay as much as 39.6%. Republicans want to lower the tax rate on pass-through income to as little as 15%.
 - Lowering rates on pass-through income would not benefit "small businesses." The Tax Policy Center sums it up well: "First, nearly two-thirds of those with pass-through income are already in the 15 percent bracket or below. Thus, they wouldn't benefit at all..."
 - Beyond that, 90% of the benefits of lowering the rate on pass-through income goes to the top 20% of households—and half the benefits go to the top 1%. In addition, the lower rate would create a huge loophole in the tax code that wealthy people could exploit by converting their salary income into business income and thus be subject to the lower rate. **One of the biggest beneficiaries of this change? Donald Trump himself.** Nearly the entire Trump Organization is structured as a series of pass-through entities—meaning that if Congress lowers the pass-through tax rate from the top rate of 39.6% to 15%, Donald Trump would see his tax bill cut in half. This underscores the need for Trump to release his tax returns.
- **Repeal the Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT)**
 - The AMT is a parallel part of the tax code that was put in place to ensure that even the wealthiest individuals cannot exploit tax loopholes to get out of paying taxes altogether. Wealthy individuals must first calculate their tax obligation under the regular tax code, and then calculate it again under the AMT. If the AMT is greater, they must pay the difference.
 - Republicans want to eliminate the AMT, so the wealthy can once again exploit the tax code to get away with paying little or no taxes at all. This is one of the changes where Trump himself stands to gain the most, and his example illustrates why the AMT is so important. According to his 2005 tax return, Trump paid \$38 million in taxes on \$153

million in income; \$31 million—or four-fifths—of his tax payment was due to the alternative minimum tax. Had it not been in place, his effective tax rate for that year would have been just 3.5 percent. That’s far below what most middle-class families pay.

- According to the latest IRS data, 93% percent of the AMT is now paid for by individuals making over \$200,000.
- **Repeal the estate tax**
 - This is a tax that only affects individuals with estates worth more than \$5.5 million, meaning it would involve only 0.2% of all deaths. The estate tax forestalls even greater wealth inequality. A recent study shows the richest 400 billionaires have more wealth than the bottom 62% of Americans combined. That kind of wealth inequality is fueled by the persistent concentration of wealth, which the estate tax is intended to correct.
 - After years of undermining the estate tax by lowering the tax rate and raising the threshold, now Republicans want to repeal it all together.
 - 99.8% of estates would be entirely unaffected since the estate tax already applies exclusively to the wealthiest estates. Of those wealthy estates that it does apply, the Joint Committee on Taxation estimates that the vast majority of benefits from repealing the estate tax would go to families with estates worth \$20 million or more.
- We’ve got you covered. [Be sure to read our explainer](#) (think of it like Tax Policy 101!) and be sure to use our [resources, call scripts, and town hall questions](#) to begin organizing. You can find our explainer on corporate tax cuts [here](#).

Our MoCs:

- [Sen. Murray: GOP Tax Cut Plan is More of the Same - A Gift to the Wealthiest Americans and the Biggest Corporations](#)

To Do:

- Call Congressman Heck and ask him to oppose the House Budget resolution, calling for billions of dollars in cuts to Medicaid and Medicare to give a huge tax cut to the wealthy and corporations.
- Call Senators Murray and Cantwell and ask them to withhold support for any tax plan that has tax cuts for the wealthy and corporations.

2. Aid to Puerto Rico

Information from Indivisible Guide

Summary: Congress must pass an emergency relief package for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. It is *unconscionable* that our government has failed to give the people of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands (U.S. Citizens!) the same attention as it did the victims of Hurricanes Harvey and Irma.

Talking Points:

- **The Trump administration announced a temporary ten-day waiver of the Jones Act.** While this is an important step in acknowledging the dire needs of the people of Puerto Rico it is not nearly enough. Puerto Rico will take months if not years to rebuild and to reinstate the Jones Act would force the island to divide their limited shipping capacity between basic goods and the materials the island will need to rebuild. It took much work from organizers and people like you to get the government to take this step, but we also understand that *Puerto Rico will need much more than ten days to rebuild and demand that* the Jones Act is repealed.
- Just prior to Maria, the island declared bankruptcy and faces the largest municipal debt crisis in US history since Detroit, but because of its Commonwealth status, other US municipalities, it was denied debt absolution. Specifically, Puerto Rico's government owes \$74 billion to bondholders, and an additional \$50 billion in pension obligations to teachers and almost all other government employees. Since Puerto Rico is not sovereign and cannot restructure with the World Bank or IMF this small island has no chance at correcting the generational economic crisis it is in. Our legislators need to reprioritize the needs of this island territory, home to 3.5 million Americans and absolve the debt. *Trump has already tried to use this debt as a weapon against the people of the island who are without food, water, and electricity.*

To Do:

- Ask our Members of Congress to provide an emergency relief package for the victims of Hurricane Maria and to **permanently** rescind the Jones Act, an antiquated law that has made it difficult for supplies to reach the Island of Puerto Rico.
- Sign a petition to [Grant Immediate Emergency Aid to Puerto Rico and Eliminate Cost-Sharing for FEMA Aid.](#)

3. HR 3222 - Do No Harm Act

Suggestion from Lisa

Summary: Progressive champion Rep. Joe Kennedy III, along with Rep. Bobby Scott and **50 other co-sponsors**, has introduced the Do No Harm Act - long-overdue legislation to reaffirm that **one person's religious freedom can never be used to deny another one's civil rights.**

Talking Points:

- When right-wing, anti-LGBTQ extremists want to discriminate against LGBTQ people across the country, they often use religion as an excuse. Unfortunately, there is a federal law that helps protect their bigotry: The Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), designed to protect the rights of religious minorities. Today, **it is mainly used to justify discrimination.**
- RFRAs are helping right-wing bigots and lawmakers across the country refuse medical treatment to women and LGBTQ people, deny women reproductive health care, justify discrimination in hiring, and override nondiscrimination laws.
- In 2014, the U.S. Supreme Court made an extreme interpretation of RFRAs in the *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby* case. It ruled that for-profit businesses could exclude birth control from their employees' health-care plans even though the Affordable Care Act mandated a birth control benefit.³ In other words, **the Supreme Court allowed Hobby Lobby to withhold basic and vital health care services from their employees all across the country based on the owner's religious beliefs.**
- The Do No Harm Act would explicitly prevent the federal RFRA from being used by agencies and organizations that receive government funding to justify or defend discrimination in cases of wages and collective bargaining, access to health care, public accommodations, child labor and abuse, or social services.⁴
- This legislation would create a clear distinction between religious freedom and a license to discriminate. Under the Do No Harm Act, government clerks would be prohibited from refusing marriage licenses to same-sex couples; hospitals that receive government funding would be mandated to provide equal access to appropriate health care to women and transgender people; foster and adoption agencies wouldn't be able to refuse to work with same-sex couples; and businesses wouldn't be able to deny reproductive health care to their employees.
- This was referred to the Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on the Constitution and Civil Justice on August 3, 2017.
- For more background on H.R. 3222 - [Congress.gov - HR 3222](https://www.congress.gov/bills/115/3222) and [govtrack.gov - HR 3222](https://www.govtrack.gov/congress/bills/115/3222)

Our MoCs:

- There are 79 democratic co-sponsors of HR 3222 as of ; Denny Heck is not one of them.

To Do:

- Ask Representative Heck to co-sponsor HR 3222.

4. HR 3144 - Operations of the Federal Columbia River Power System

Suggestion from Indivisible WA Environment Network

Summary: Kathy McMorris Rogers, sponsor of HR 3144, wants to starve our Southern Resident Orca population to death and lock Washington State taxpayers into a failing, money-losing series of dams and locks on the Snake River.

Talking Points:

- HR 3144 would undermine recovery efforts and planning for salmon in the Snake and Columbia Rivers, and would have ecosystem-wide impacts to those that rely on salmon, including the endangered Southern Resident orca population.
- It is based on incomplete and misleading information, would overturn two recent judicial decisions from the U.S. District Court in Portland, OR, and circumvents the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the cornerstone of our public policy review process.
- It prohibits federal agencies from evaluating credible recovery options, including removing the four outdated and costly Lower Snake River dams as part of the court-ordered Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process currently underway.
- "The dams' two main benefits or services: flatwater transportation and energy production. Together the reports demonstrate that 1) commercial navigation on the lower Snake River generates less than 50 cents for every dollar spent to provide it and 2) that electricity produced by the dams wouldn't be missed if it were to vanish from the Northwest power grid tomorrow."
- "From a cost standpoint there are options that result in lower cost power for Northwest ratepayers if the dams are removed."
 - [Friends of the Eel River - Two New Reports: Lower Snake River Dams Failing to Pay Their Way](#)
- Referred to the Committee on Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Water, Power and Oceans (July 20, 2017) and the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment (June 30, 2017).
- Background
 - [Seattle PI - Another orca calf is dead - these killer whales are in the sunset of their existence](#)
 - [Seattle Times - Another orca born in boom dies, likely from malnutrition](#)
 - WA State Democrats Sept. 2017 Resolution Opposing HR 3144: [Opposing H.R. 3144: Requiring an Act of Congress to Alter Snake River 2 Dams](#)
 - [Congress.gov - HR 3144](#)
 - [Earth Justice - Why the removal of four Snake River dams is a necessary and feasible action to save wild salmon](#)

To Do:

- Ask Representative Denny Heck to vote NO on HR 3144, a counter-productive and damaging legislation, which does not protect the Columbia River and its salmon; it moves us away from developing real and lasting solutions.
- Sign a petition here: [US.Whales.org - HR 3144 Is Dangerous for Salmon and Orcas](#)

5. Trump's foreign policy blunders are endangering us all

Information from Indivisible Guide

Summary: With each day in office, Donald Trump actively makes our country less safe. From his tweets to his bluster to his white supremacist policies, Trump poses a risk to us all. On a weekly basis in these emails, we'll report out the significant ways this Administration is making us less safe.

Talking Points: Here's this week's #TrumpThreatLevel:

- **Escalating tensions with North Korea.** Trump continued to tweet insults and threats at North Korea, including a threat that North Korea “won't be around much longer.” North Korea responded by saying it considers these statements to be a “declaration of war.” A war with North Korea would be devastating and completely unnecessary. **But instead of diffusing the situation, Trump is making it worse.**
- **Slashing Refugees Admitted into U.S.** On Wednesday, the Trump administration decided to slash the maximum amount of refugees allowed into the U.S. down to the [lowest level in decades](#). This shows our international partners that we can't be counted upon to help solve the global refugee crisis, contributes to right-wing fearmongering about refugees, and inflames racial tensions.
- **Expanded Muslim Ban.** On Monday, Trump's administration issued another version of his hateful and unconstitutional Muslim ban, this time with a blatant attempt to escape court scrutiny by throwing in a couple of non-Muslim-majority countries into the list. We're not fooled: a ban is a ban. The ban emboldening bigots in the U.S. and stokes anti-American sentiment abroad. Join us and our partners on 10/18 to declare: [#NoMuslimBanEver](#).

6. Consumer Protection Rule

Suggestion from Lisa

Summary: In the middle of a consequential week for the future of American health care, Senate Republicans were hoping to sneak through a controversial nullification of a key rule from the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

Talking Points:

- Republican leaders are whipping to secure the votes to overturn a rule CFPB finalized in July, which would protect financial companies from class-action lawsuits and deny consumers a day in court. The rule is among the most consequential actions the CFPB has taken since its founding.
- Executives for both Wells Fargo and Equifax, both accused of ripping off millions of consumers, will [testify](#) in [Senate committees](#) next week. Both companies have [used arbitration clauses](#) in an attempt to [deny consumers access](#) to the courts. By getting the arbitration vote out of the way before the hearings, Republicans can avoid having to hand a gift to financial companies while Wells Fargo and Equifax sit squarely in the public spotlight.
- The CFPB's rule bars consumer financial contracts from including clauses that force disputes into an arbitration proceeding, instead of allowing customers to join together with others in a class-action lawsuit.
- CFPB passed the "[arbitration rule](#)" preventing the class-action ban in July; it's scheduled to take effect next March. But under a 1996 law called the Congressional Review Act, Congress can by resolution reject any federal agency regulation within 60 legislative days of it being finalized. This type of resolution only needs a majority vote in the Senate, with limited debate and no possibility of a filibuster.
- The House has already passed a resolution killing the CFPB rule; the Senate has until roughly October to follow suit.
- Public Citizen notes that corporations opposing the rule have [spent over \\$1 billion](#) urging Republicans to pass Congressional Review Act resolutions. The 24 Senate co-sponsors of the arbitration rule resolution have [received \\$100 million](#) from the financial services industry over their careers.
- [The Intercept - Senate Republicans Plan to Sneakily Gut Major Consumer Protection Rule](#)
- [SJR 47 - Joint Resolution Providing for Congressional Disapproval ... Of the Rule Submitted by Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection relating to "arbitration Agreements"](#). [Congress.gov - SJR 47](#)

Our MoCs:

- [Murray Press Release: After Massive Data Breach Puts Millions of Americans' Information at Risk, Sen. Murray Calls on Credit Bureau to Do the Right Thing and End Use of Forced Arbitration Clauses](#)

To Do:

- Ask our Senators to oppose SJR 47. Thank Senator Murray for speaking out for the End of Forced Arbitration Clauses.

7. Net Neutrality and FCC Chair Ajit Pai

Suggestion from Lisa

Summary: While in office, Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman Ajit Pai spearheaded efforts that would let Internet service providers control online content and how it's accessed.

Talking Points:

- Pai said current regulations restrict innovation.
- Cantwell told fellow lawmakers this week that as long as Pai continues to do that, she can't support his nomination.
- "As the chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, he has demonstrated a disdain to these important public interest principles that he's supposed to be upholding," Cantwell said. "And it shows a disregard for the innovators in America that are striving so much to build the economy of the future."
- Pai was appointed to the FCC by President Obama and has been re-nominated by President Trump.
- The Senate plans to hold a confirmation vote next week.
- [NWPR - Washington Sen. Maria Cantwell Opposes FCC Chair Over Net Neutrality](#)

Our MoCs:

- Washington Democratic Senator Maria Cantwell is joining net neutrality advocates in their efforts to block the head of the Federal Communications Commission from a second term.

To Do:

- Thank Senator Cantwell for joining net neutrality advocates in their efforts to block the head of the Federal Communications Commission, Ajit Pai, from a second term.
- Ask Senator Murray to block Ajit Pai from a second term.

8. Sinclair Merger

Request from Indivisible Towson in Baltimore County, MD sent via email to Lisa

Summary: A member of Indivisible Towson (Baltimore County, MD) has asked our local group to help prevent Sinclair Broadcasting from purchasing Tribune.

Talking Points:

- Since Sinclair Broadcasting's HQ is located in Maryland, the local Indivisible Towson group is reaching out to other Indivisible groups to collaborate on ways to block Sinclair's purchase of Tribune. This Indivisible group knew we were working on this topic because of a previous OI Research Report ([August 21](#)), and they hope to join forces to magnify our actions.
- This is a national issue. Sinclair Broadcasting is an aggressively conservative TV-media company that currently owns ~40% of local TV stations across the country. They require their stations to air right-wing opinion pieces and politically biased content. They are trying to purchase Tribune, which would take their ownership to 70% of local TV stations. The FCC, under Trump appointee Pai is using a loophole to get around antitrust law.
- You can also check out [John Oliver's segment](#) on them.
- Indivisible Towson's next steps are to contact Indivisibles represented by people on the appropriate House and Senate Judiciary subcommittees, contact PA Indivisibles to encourage their AG to sue Sinclair again (suit brought in 2014), contact MA Indivisibles to encourage their AG to sue (recent Globe editorial against purchase may give boost), and piggyback on Allied Progress' anti-Sinclair campaign. We are also reaching out to other local MD groups to use their networks to determine the best strategy.

To Do:

- Submit a comment on the merger to the FCC: <https://aahuddle.org/say-no-to-trump-tv>
- Contact your friends in WA-07. Pramila Jayapal (WA-07) is on the Subcommittee on regulatory Reform, Commercial and Antitrust Law. Ask her what they are doing to block this merger.
- Contact your Attorney General. If there is head-to-head competition between Sinclair owned stations and Tribune owned stations in Washington, the AG has standing to investigate the merger. According to the office of MD Attorney General Frosh, several State Attorneys General in states where there is head to head competition, are investigating the merger.
- Call your Members of Congress!

9. Other Issues

a) Health Care

- **Vote on Graham-Cassidy bill cancelled:** The NYT reported that Senate Majority Leader McConnell announced Sept 26 that the Senate will not be holding a planned vote on the Graham-Cassidy bill. This took place after Senate Republican meetings on the bill, and a day after Susan Collins announced that she was a solid “no” on the bill. Shortly before the vote was cancelled, Lindsay Graham and Bill Cassidy introduced a new version of their proposal, which would have given Maine, Alaska, Arizona and Kentucky more funding than initially proposed.
- **Republicans looking at including ACA repeal in next reconciliation budget resolution:** Politico reports that some Republican senators are proposing that the next budget resolution, up until now expected to focus on tax cuts, should also include language on ACA repeal. In order to use reconciliation and pass legislation with only 50 votes in the Senate, a budget resolution must be in effect that provides for the item proposed, it must be budget-related and it must not increase the deficit. There can only be one such resolution in effect at a time. These members are proposing that the upcoming tax legislation also include ACA repeal provisions. Members proposing this include Lindsay Graham, Ron Johnson (Wisconsin), James Lankford (Oklahoma), Ted Cruz and Orrin Hatch, chair of the key Senate Finance Committee, which deals both with taxes and health care. Rand Paul said he was open to the idea. Graham and Johnson sit on the Senate Budget Committee, where Republicans only have a one-vote margin. If they say they will not vote for a budget resolution that does not include health care, Republicans cannot vote out any budget resolution. Majority Leader McConnell is a skeptic on combining the two issues.
- **Poll shows majority disapproved of Graham-Cassidy:** Politico reported that a CBS poll found that 52% of respondents said they disapproved of the bill while 20% said they supported it. A total of 74% of those polled said that the ACA should remain as it is or that it should be maintained but needs some changes. Approximately 25% said that the ACA should be repealed completely.
- **Initial CBO analysis:** The CBO found that the bill would reduce the deficit by at least \$133 billion over the next ten years. The savings would occur mainly because the funds for new block grants between 2020 and 2026 would be less than the reduction in federal subsidies for health insurance. Funding would shift away from states that expanded eligibility for Medicaid under the ACA and toward states that didn't. They said that millions of people would lose health insurance. The exact number would vary, in part because states would make many key decisions. But the reduction in funding, including the change in how basic Medicaid would be funded, would ensure less people receiving insurance. There would be fewer people in the individual market because subsidies would decline and enrollment in all kinds of insurance would be lower because the individual and employer mandates would be repealed. The new programs established by the states would somewhat (but not fully) offset these cuts, at least through 2026. The reduction in coverage would increase significantly in 2020.
- **USC-Brookings Schaeffer Initiative for Health Policy analysis:** They attempted to replicate the CBO's methodology. They estimated:
 - 15 million fewer people with insurance in 2018 and 2019 compared to current law;
 - 21 million fewer insured by 2026, not including the difficulties of the transition;
 - 32 million fewer people with coverage after 2026 if the funding provided in the Graham-Cassidy bill for block grants is not reauthorized by Congress (which is what the bill currently provides). This does not include the change in basic Medicaid from an entitlement to a capped per capita funding model.

b) Immigration

- ***Trump replaces travel ban with new one:*** The NYT reported that the Trump Administration replaced its temporary travel ban with a permanent one. The new ban indefinitely bans nearly all travel from seven countries, including most of the nations covered by the original travel ban, citing threats to national security. The new ban imposes permanent restrictions rather than temporary ones. Starting next month, most citizens of Iran, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Chad and North Korea will be banned from entering the US. Citizens of Iraq and some groups of people in Venezuela who seek to visit the US will face restrictions or heightened scrutiny. Each of the countries will be under its own set of travel restrictions. However, in most cases citizens of the countries will be unable to emigrate to the US permanently and most will be barred from coming to work, study or vacation in the US.
- Administration officials said that the new rules would not apply to legal permanent residents of the US, and that visitors who currently hold valid visas from the countries listed will not have their visas revoked. Students already in the US can finish their studies and employees of businesses in the US who are from the targeted countries may stay for as long as their existing visas remain valid. People whose visas expire will be subject to the travel ban, officials said. People seeking access to the US as refugees are not covered by the proclamation, officials said. Entry of refugees is currently limited by the president's original travel ban, and officials said the administration was preparing new rules for refugees, to be announced soon.
- Most nations met new, minimum standards for identifying and screening potential travelers and sharing investigative information with law enforcement agencies in the US. Some nations that initially fell short of those standards agreed to implement changes to avoid travel restrictions. Several countries either failed to meet those standards or refused. The new travel restrictions will be in place indefinitely. The US will consider lifting the restrictions on those countries affected only if they meet the new minimum standards.
- ***Supreme Court cancels hearing on previous travel ban:*** The NYT reported that the Supreme Court on Sept 25 canceled arguments on Trump's prior travel ban. They asked lawyers to submit briefs by Oct 5 discussing the impact of the new travel ban. The court asked the parties to address "whether, or to what extent, the proclamation" may render the case moot. The court also asked for briefings on a question not addressed in the proclamation, concerning the earlier ban's suspension of the nation's refugee program. That suspension is scheduled to expire next month. On that question, too, the court asked the parties to explain whether the issue would soon be moot. The court signaled that it may never decide the case saying that the "cases are removed from the oral argument calendar, pending further order of the court".
- ***Trump proposes sharp cut to refugees allowed into the US in the next year:*** The Washington Post reported that Trump plans to cut refugee admissions to the US down to 45,000 in the next year. Obama had allowed entry to 110,000 last year. Since the law required an annual decision on the number of refugees to be allowed into the US in 1980, the number has only been under 70,000 once, under Reagan, when it was 67,000 for 1986. Refugee resettlement agencies had said 75,000 would be the minimum needed to meet resettlement needs.
- ***Bob Ferguson sues firm that operates Tacoma detention center:*** The Seattle Times reported that State Attorney General Bob Ferguson filed suit in Pierce County Superior Court against the GEO Group, which operates the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma and 140 other detention facilities nationwide. The Northwest Detention Center is the country's fourth-largest detention center. Ferguson charged that detainees are paid a dollar a day for their work (and sometimes just chips and candy), a violation of the state's minimum wage law.
 - GEO projected in 2015 that its Tacoma facility would take in \$57 million in revenues annually at full capacity, around 1,575 people. Nationally, the company earned more than \$2 billion in 2016. The company uses detainee labor to perform virtually all work at the detention center besides security. That includes preparing meals, doing laundry and cleaning common areas and restrooms. GEO called detainee labor a "voluntary work program", but an attorney in Ferguson's office said some detainees indicated they felt compelled to work.

- Ferguson’s office said GEO’s contract with the feds requires it to follow state and local laws. Those include abiding by Washington’s minimum wage: currently \$11 an hour. State law allows certain exemptions, including for government-run prisons and jails. Privately run facilities are not exempt. Ferguson noted that the Northwest Detention Center is not a criminal correctional facility. Detainees held there are going through civil immigration proceedings.
- ***Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to start collecting immigrant social media information in October:*** BuzzFeed reported that DHS published a new rule on September 18 saying that it plans to include social media handles, aliases, associated identifiable information and search results as part of US immigrants’ records. The US government choose to deny access to the country based on the political, religious, or social beliefs and information an immigrant posts on social media. Opponents also argue that U.S. citizens themselves might start self-censoring who they interact with on social media out of fear that the information they exchange with a foreign national could be misconstrued and used against them. The new rule takes effect on October 18. Comments can be submitted on the rule until then. A link to the rule can be found at: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2017/09/18/2017-19365/privacy-act-of-1974-system-of-records>
 - Comments can be submitted in one of three ways. The item is docket number: DHS-2017-0038.
 - *Federal e-Rulemaking Portal:* <http://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the instructions for submitting comments.
 - *Fax:* 202-343-4010.
 - *Mail:* Jonathan R. Cantor, Acting Chief Privacy Officer, Privacy Office, Department of Homeland Security, Washington, DC 20528-0655.

c) Republicans introduce new Dreamers legislation

- Politico reported that Senator Thom Tillis of North Carolina and James Lankford of Oklahoma have introduced a new bill regarding dreamers, youth brought to the US illegally by their parents who had been provided temporary legal status by executive order during the Obama administration. The bill would provide a pathway to legalization, but would not allow them to sponsor family members to the US while they have green cards.
 - To be eligible, an immigrant must have been in the US since June 15, 2012 – the start of the DACA program and before the age of 16. They would be required to obtain a high school diploma, pass a thorough criminal background check, submit biometric data to the Department of Homeland Security and pay off any back taxes or establish a repayment plan. This would give Dreamers a conditional permanent residence status, which they would have to maintain for 10 years before they could apply for a formal green card. In that status, the Dreamers would either have to earn a college degree, serve in the military for at least three years or be consistently employed. The status must be renewed after five years. Once they obtain green cards, they immigrants would be required to wait for five years until they could apply for U.S. citizenship. Their undocumented parents would be barred from petitioning to stay in the US based on their children’s legal status.
- The Washington Post reports that conservative Republicans are agreeing on new items they would demand be included in any Dreamer fix. Many of these might be deal-killers for Democrats. These would include a prohibition on allowing Dreamer relatives to immigrate (as in the Tillis bill), mandating that employers use E-Verify, stepping up enforcement against those overstaying legitimate visas, limiting protection for those who seek asylum at US borders, and a focus on changing the legal immigration system to focus on skills and away from family reunification.
- Democrats in the House and Senate say these demands go far beyond the tentative agreement between Trump, Schumer and Pelosi. They say Democrats would only agree to additional border enforcement other than wall-funding. Many moderate Republicans are opposed to these items being included in a DACA fix bill, which they favor.

From Jen’s Action Checklist:

- **Action: Advocate to keep DACA youth here in the US, their home.**
 Call: Your 3 MoCs ([lookup](#)). *If you’ve already called.*
 Script: Hi. I am from [ZIP], calling to ask [name] to support a clean Dream Act that gives permanent legal status to DACA recipients without attaching funding for a border wall. Has [name] co-sponsored [S. 1615](#) (Senate) / [H.R. 3440](#) (House)? Thanks!

d) Russia connection

- ***Department of Homeland Security (DHS) tells states about Russian hacking in 2016:*** The Washington Post reported that DHS contacted election officials in 21 states on September 22 and notified them that they had been targeted by Russian government hackers during the 2016 election campaign. DHS told states it is important that they strengthen their defenses against hacking now. DHS left it up to individual states to decide whether to make the information public. The hacking did not penetrate computer systems except in a couple of states, including Illinois. State elections officials in Alabama, Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Iowa, Maryland, Minnesota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Wisconsin and Washington were among the states told September 22 that they were targeted.
- ***Facebook to turn over Russian linked ads to Congress:*** The New York Times reported that Facebook said that it was turning over more than 3,000 Russia-linked ads to congressional intelligence committees. Twitter announced that it will brief the Senate Intelligence Committee September 27 behind closed doors.
- ***How Russian operatives used Facebook ads were focused:*** The Washington Post reported that the batch of over 3,000 Russian-bought ads Facebook is turning over to Congress shows an understanding of US social divides, with some ads promoting Black Lives Matter and others suggesting that these same groups pose a rising political threat. The Russian campaign sought to increase discord among religious groups. Others highlighted support for Hillary Clinton among Muslim women. The previously ads suggest that the Russian operatives worked off of evolving lists of racial, religious, political and economic themes. They used these to create pages, write posts and craft ads that would appear in users' news feeds with the apparent goal of appealing to one audience and alienating another. Russian-bought ads were used to promote anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim messages. At least one-quarter of the ads were geographically targeted. Some of the disinformation spread by Russians was meant to reinforce the idea that Bernie Sanders had been mistreated by the Democratic Party and that they shouldn't vote in the general election.
- Politico reported that some of the Russian-bought ads backed Jill Stein of the Green Party in the general election campaign, while others supported Bernie Sanders and still others supported Trump. Others criticized Hillary Clinton. Each set of ads were targeted at specific audiences. A number of the general election ads questioned Clinton's authenticity and echoed her liberal critics.
- ***Manafort offered to give Russian billionaire private briefings on 2016 campaign:*** The Washington Post reported that less than two weeks before Trump accepted the Republican presidential nomination, Paul Manafort, his then-campaign chairman, offered to provide briefings on the race to a Russian oligarch close to the Kremlin to whom he owed nearly \$19 million. Manafort made the offer in an email to an overseas intermediary, asking that a message be sent to Oleg Deripaska, an aluminum billionaire. The email is among tens of thousands of documents that have been turned over to congressional investigators and to the Robert Mueller investigation. In an earlier email, prior to his role with Trump, Manafort alludes to how the 2016 campaign might be used to repay Deripaska. There is no evidence in the documents showing whether Deripaska received Manafort's offer or that briefings took place.
- ***Mueller requests extensive records from Trump White House:*** The New York Times and Washington Post reported that Robert Mueller is seeking White House documents related to Trump's actions as president. He has asked for documents related to: Trump's firing of Comey; his meeting with Russian officials in which he described the Comey firing; the firing of Michael Flynn, including how the White House responded to Sally Yates' warning about Flynn's Russian ties; and documents about how the White House responded to questions from the New York Times about the June 2016 meeting at Trump Tower between Donald Jr. and other campaign officials with a Russian lawyer and other Russians and intermediaries. The document request does not include requests for information about Trump's personal finances or business dealings.

e) Environment

- **Washington state denies key permit for Columbia River coal terminal:** The state Department of Ecology denied a water quality permit for the Millennium Bulk Terminals proposed coal export terminal in Longview. The permit is needed to fill 24 acres of wetland and to dredge 41 acres of Columbia River riverbed. The project cannot proceed without the permit. The developers have said they will file suit in court against the decision. The project was planned to export up to 44 million metric tons of coal a year annually, shipped in up to 16 mile-long trains daily. It would be the largest coal-export terminal in the US, if completed.
- **Zinke says one-third of Interior staff are disloyal to Trump policies and promises huge changes:** The Washington Post reported that Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, in a speech to the National Petroleum Council, claimed that nearly a third of this staff is not “loyal to the flag”, saying that workers in DC are reluctant to relax regulations to permit increased coal mining and oil and gas drilling on public land. He promises huge changes by restructuring staff positions and shifting decision-making in the BLM and Bureau of Reclamation from DC to offices in western states. Senator Maria Cantwell, ranking member on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee attacked the comments, saying the comments “betray a fundamental misunderstanding of the role of federal civil service...They are non-political employees charged with implementing and enforcing laws passed by Congress.”