Olympia Indivisible

*Research Report: February 3, 2018*

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**National Indivisible Weekly Email to group leaders**

**Your weekly Group leader to-dos:**

1. **Republicans caved to the #ReleaseTheMemo fake scandal. This is a PR stunt to undermine the Mueller investigation. Read our** [resource about the memo and use our scripts to call your members of Congress](https://act.indivisible.org/go/58420?t=5&akid=12353%2E328900%2E-e4JRu)**(MoCs).**
2. **The Mueller investigation is heating up quickly.** We’ve updated our resource on the investigation, why it matters, and what you demand of your MoCs right now ([read it here](https://act.indivisible.org/go/53933?t=6&akid=12353%2E328900%2E-e4JRu)). Then, [visit www.trumpisnotabovethelaw.org, our emergency planning partnership with Moveon.org and other organizations](https://act.indivisible.org/go/58421?t=7&akid=12353%2E328900%2E-e4JRu), to read up on the latest scenarios and begin planning if Trump takes significant actions to undermine the Trump-Russia investigation.
3. **Our Immigrant Ally toolkit has been updated.** The fight over DACA in Congress continues, but you can still act locally right now to be a strong ally for immigrant youth. [Read the latest toolkit on our website now to find out what you can do.](https://act.indivisible.org/go/58422?t=8&akid=12353%2E328900%2E-e4JRu)
4. **Another week goes by, another week Trump threatens our national security.** Be sure to [read our weekly #TrumpThreatLevel on the IndivisiBlog](https://act.indivisible.org/go/12866?t=11&akid=12353%2E328900%2E-e4JRu) now.

Dear Group Leaders,

As January came to a close and February ramped up, the GOP and Trump Administration met in a remote locale in West Virginia to discuss their legislative agenda for 2018.

The GOP held a similar summit just days after his Inauguration last year in Philadelphia. Trump’s main goals were to pass “landmark legislation” -- specifically on healthcare and tax cuts for his family and billionaire friends. **And thanks to your hard work, the Affordable Care Act is still in place, and it took nearly a full year for Trump to pass his first major piece of legislation.**

No matter what they come up with this weekend, this movement has ground the Trump agenda to a halt… and we can keep on doing it all the way to November. Even though they haven’t announced their agenda, here’s what we doknow ([read our full blog post on what to expect in February](https://act.indivisible.org/go/53931?t=16&akid=12353%2E328900%2E-e4JRu)):

* Dreamers are being deported and Trump and the GOP aren’t doing anything to clean up the mess Trump made when he ended DACA in September. We need Congress to fix Trump’s mess, but we can’t let Trump use Dreamers as hostages for his extreme immigration plans, which is why we won’t accept anything less than a “clean” Dream Act.
* Trump declassified a now-public document written by Rep. Devin Nunes with misleading talking points designed to undermine the Mueller investigation and paint a target on Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein’s back.
* Trump is expected to announce his infrastructure plan very soon (i.e. a thinly-veiled attempt to sell off public goods to corporations and private equity firms).
* Congress goes on recess on February 19, and we must hold those MoCs who’ve taken bad votes accountable.

We’re all looking forward to that big blue wave in November, but there’s still so much work to do to continue fighting the Trump agenda… while building the political infrastructure needed to take back the House (and maybe the Senate!). For now, **here’s everything you need to know to fight the GOP’s agenda in February:**

**1) Read our latest resources and take action:**

* + **The #ReleaseTheMemo fake scandal:** Rep. Devin Nunes (R-CA… aka that guy who once recused himself from the Russia investigation after sneaking into the White House) has put together a now-public “memo” of talking points to shield Trump from accountability. This document is a fabricated political stunt to stop the Mueller investigation.[Read our resource to learn about the memo (and Rep. Adam Schiff’s realmemo)](https://act.indivisible.org/go/58420?t=17&akid=12353%2E328900%2E-e4JRu), and use our scripts to call your MoCs.
  + **Mueller’s investigation:**Things are moving quickly in the Russia investigation. [We’ve updated our resource on the investigation, its importance, and what you need to do](https://act.indivisible.org/go/53933?t=18&akid=12353%2E328900%2E-e4JRu) if Special Counsel Mueller or Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein are fired. We’ve teamed up with MoveOn.org and dozens of other allies to plan rapid response actions in case Trump takes significant actions to undermine the Trump-Russia investigation. [Visit www.trumpisnotabovethelaw.org to find the latest scenarios and begin planning.](https://act.indivisible.org/go/58421?t=19&akid=12353%2E328900%2E-e4JRu)
  + **Protecting Dreamers: We’ve updated our Immigrant Ally Toolkit to help you support Dreamers. DACA recipients will begin losing their protections at a rate of 1,200 a day beginning** March 5**, and Trump and his white supremacist cronies are holding Dreamers hostage to push a radical anti-immigrant agenda. The fight in Congress over Dream Act continues, but there are ways that you can help locally.** [Read our latest toolkit on our website now](https://act.indivisible.org/go/58422?t=20&akid=12353%2E328900%2E-e4JRu) **to find out how.**

**2) Start planning events to fight Trump’s infrastructure plan on February 12 and 13:** Trump’s infrastructure framework was leaked last week [(read our explainer on it here)](https://act.indivisible.org/go/47564?t=21&akid=12353%2E328900%2E-e4JRu). His plan is expected to lean heavily on private investors to finance rebuilding our nation’s infrastructure. It won’t help smaller rural communities and communities of color with the repairs they need to their roads, bridges, transit systems, schools, affordable housing, water systems, and electric grids. [Read our organizing toolkit to start planning your event](https://act.indivisible.org/go/58424?t=22&akid=12353%2E328900%2E-e4JRu), then be sure to [register your event on our map](http://act.indivisible.org/go/18598?t=23&akid=12353%2E328900%2E-e4JRu) so we can send to our supporters in your area!

#### **This week’s #TrumpThreatLevel**

* **Trump continues to pave the way for war with North Korea, with real consequences. Trump spent an absurd amount of time in his State of the Union address using scare tactics to talk about North Korea, similar to how George W. Bush primed us for a war with Iraq in his own SOTU 15 years earlier.**
* **Trump still has not implemented sanctions on Russia.** Congress voted 419-3 in the House and 98-2 in the Senate last year to punish Russia for interfering in the 2016 election, but the administration still has not taken steps to implement the mandatory sanctions laid out in the law. This shows he doesn’t take seriously the threat posed by Russia and doesn’t care to confront it.
* **We are losing our best national security professionals.** The State Department’s top career diplomat, Tom Shannon, retired. This leaves the State Department with only one career ambassador of the five who were there at the beginning of the Trump Administration. Trump also dropped a highly-qualified professional, Victor Cha, from consideration as ambassador to South Korea, because Cha opposes a military strike in North Korea. That post remains vacant.

[Be sure to read the latest #TrumpThreatLevel on the IndivisiBlog here.](https://act.indivisible.org/go/12866?t=26&akid=12353%2E328900%2E-e4JRu)

In solidarity,  
The Indivisible Team

***Steve Hodes’ Call to Action for his congregation:***

1. **Oppose Trump and House Republican attempts to limit or end the Russia investigation by firing Rosenstein and oppose efforts to divert from the Russia investigations with crazy conspiracy theories and attacks on the FBI:**

* We learned this week that Trump ordered Mueller fired in June, but backed off when the White House Counsel threatened to resign. We learned that Andrew McCabe left as Deputy FBI director under pressure from FBI Director Wray. Trump has been attacking McCabe for months. We also learned that shortly after Trump fired Comey, Trump asked Deputy Attorney General Ron Rosenstein in a private meeting if he was “on my team.”
* House Intelligence Committee Republicans voted to release a 4-page memo prepared by Chairman Devin Nunes’ staff that cherry-picked selected classified intelligence information collected during the Russia investigation to prepare a memo that attacks the FBI and Justice Department. They refused to vote to release a memo prepared by committee Democrats that critiques their memo. The FBI only had hours to review the memo before the vote to release it and the Justice Department was not allowed to review it. There is a possibility that the White House was involved in preparing the memo.
* Trump and his chief of staff have said he will release the memo Friday, February 2. The Deputy Attorney General and FBI director appealed to them to not release it without a review by the FBI and Department of Justice, but were ignored. The FBI and Department of Justice then made strong public statements against the release, despite knowing Trump favored it.
* The memo argues that the FBI depended on the Christopher Steele dossier to get a FISA warrant for Carter Page and that the warrant did not disclose that key facts in the warrant were funded by the Clinton campaign. They also argue that Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein renewed the warrant (potentially giving Trump an excuse to fire Rosenstein). If Rosenstein is fired, Trump could replace him with someone who could fire Mueller or significantly limit the scope of his investigation. The memo also alleges that Christopher Steele lied to the FBI about whether he had talked to the press.
* There has been a drumbeat of attacks in the last five weeks against Robert Mueller, the FBI, and the Justice Department by conservative media and House and Senate Republican conservatives, including some committee chairs. They have worked to try to discredit the investigation and have spread elaborate lies and conspiracy theories to justify them. Meanwhile, some in the conservative media are indulging in crazy-talk conspiracy theories arguing that there is a secret society in the FBI and Justice Department out to get Trump.

***Action steps:***

* 1. Call or email our members today to let them know how important it is for them to speak out to oppose baseless attacks on the FBI and Justice Department staff.
  2. Call or email some senators who may still respect the rule of law to urge them to speak out now against these attacks and the baseless conspiracy theories spread by some members of Congress and by the conservative media.

Some possible senators include: Some Republicans include: Richard Burr, Jeff Flake, Ben Sasse, and John McCain (though he is very ill).

1. **Continue to support Dreamers:**

* The fate of the Dreamers remains up in the air. A bipartisan group of senators is negotiating to try come up with a compromise that will legalize DACA recipients with a path to citizenship, paired with more border enforcement. If they cannot agree on language to include in the budget resolution by February 8 and there is no shutdown, Senate Majority Leader McConnell agreed to bring up a neutral bill for an open amendment process in the Senate. It is unclear what he means by a “neutral” bill or whether an acceptable bill would pass the Senate.
* If such a process results in a reasonable Senate bill, it is unlikely that it would be taken up by the House given the outsize influence of the far-right “Freedom Caucus”, or signed by Trump, given anti-immigration staffers including Stephen Miller and Chief of Staff John Kelly.
* Trump has laid out his ideas for a DACA bill, but it demands radical reductions in legal immigration policy and $25 billion for a border wall and enforcement, including in the interior of the US in exchange for DACA legalization and a 12-year path to citizenship. Democrats in the House and Senate have already turned down this offer. They hope that passage of a Senate bill would put pressure on the House and on Trump.
* A DACA fix is being used by House Republicans and anti-immigration Trump staff to try to leverage the most radical anti-immigrant changes to current law they can get in exchange for the most limited DACA legalization they can get away with. Among the items they are seeking (in addition to funding for an expensive, unnecessary and unpopular border wall) are the elimination of the 50,000 per year diversity lottery, dramatic increases in staff to detain undocumented individuals deep within the US, making violation of immigration law punishable by a prison term and sharp limits on family reunification, which accounts for over half of all the annual immigration to the US.
* Democrats are torn between progressives, immigrant supporters (and their own interest in Hispanic support) pushing them to be willing to shut the government down again over DACA and angry that they stopped the shutdown so quickly on one side. On the other side, Democratic senators running in states Trump won do not want the blame for a shutdown and polls show little public support for such a move (see below). Democrats do not want a shutdown that could energize Republican voters in the fall.
* While there are real and serious disagreements over tactics to save DACA, it is not helpful to attack Senate Democrats. DACA is under threat from Trump and congressional Republicans, not Democrats. Democrats are in the minority in both Houses. When Republicans shut down the government when they were in the majority in 2013, they still could not realize their policy goals. While Democrats have real budget leverage, immigration is the issue where that leverage is weakest.
* However, in the Senate, Republicans are also divided over immigration policies. While some Republicans want dramatic limitations to immigration policy, they know that if DACA recipients begin to be deported, with all the media focused on the stories of real people who have grown up in America and know no other home, much of the public would be likely to turn against them.
* Polls show that while DACA legalization is supported by nearly 90% of the public, there is not strong support for a government shutdown over DACA. Support breaks down on partisan lines, with a third of the public blaming a shutdown on Democrats and a third on Trump and Republicans. The rest of the public doesn’t know what to think about this.
* The question for those supporting DACA is what changes to current law are not acceptable, what price is too high to pay. This is an issue the Dreamers themselves bring up, because they don’t want their legalization to come at the expense of their undocumented relatives and friends.

***Action steps:***

* 1. Send postcards, call or email our members. Ask them to push hard to include a fix for DACA one way or the other. Now is the time. But also tell them that there are some prices that are too high to pay for DACA. They include: sharp increases in funding to help deport more undocumented immigrants; making immigration offenses a crime punishable by prison; sharp limits on family reunification to radically reduce immigration (especially non-white immigration) to the US.
  2. Send postcards, call or email sympathetic Republican members of Congress. Ask them to push for a fix for DACA. Be clear you would support a reasonable compromise, but not action that would make life hell for other undocumented people, often the parents or friends of Dreamers.

1. **Defend domestic spending in the next budget bill:**

* Congress must pass yet another funding bill by midnight on Thursday, February 8 to prevent a government shutdown.
* Democratic votes have been required to pass every significant government funding bill since 2011. This is because the most extreme conservative of House Republicans (roughly 40 members) have been unwilling to vote for bills that did not sharply cut government spending, while the remainder of the Republican caucus would not agree with such sharp funding cuts. In the current situation, the budget will also require 60 votes in the Senate, while there are now only 51 Republicans. John McCain is likely too ill to show up to vote.
* Key to any agreement (separate from whether DACA is included in the budget or not) is whether any military spending increases sought by the Republicans will be matched by domestic spending increases to make up for the 20% cut in domestic spending in recent years. Congressional Democrats have made it clear that they will accept increases in military spending, but only if there are equal increases in domestic discretionary spending. While negotiators made substantial progress, it is unclear whether than can agree enough to pass legislation by midnight on February 8 to prevent another shutdown or continuing resolution.
* Given problems in the ongoing budget negotiations, House Republicans are moving toward another continuing resolution. But Republican military hawks are threatening to vote against it without a significant increase in military spending. Such an increase cannot pass in the Senate without an increase in domestic spending.

***Action steps:***

* 1. Call or email our members. Ask them to push hard to ensure that increases in military spending be matched by increases in domestic spending to meet the dramatic need for more government aid to individuals and communities in the US.

**Remember**:  *When in doubt, contact your members! For time-sensitive issues, call, email or send a postcard.  (Letters take longer to process.)*

**CONTACT INFORMATION:**

**Local Members**:

**Senator Maria Cantwell**

915 2nd Ave #3206

Seattle, WA 98174

[Phone](https://www.google.com/search?q=senator+maria+cantwell+phone&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiFkuyInq3UAhVCyWMKHfbZBtIQ6BMImgEwEA): [(206) 220-6400](javascript:void(0))

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(202) 224-3441

[www.cantwell.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/email-maria](http://www.cantwell.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/email-maria)

**Senator Patty Murray**

915 2nd Ave. # 2988

Seattle, WA 98174

[(206) 553-5545](javascript:void(0))

154 Russell Senate Office Building

Washington, DC 20510

(202)224-2621

[www.murray.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/contactme](http://www.murray.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/contactme)

**Rep. Denny Heck**

420 College Street SE

Lacey, WA 98503

(360) 459-8514

425 Cannon House Office Building

Washington, DC 205

(202) 225-9740

<http://dennyheck.house.gov/contact/email-me>

**Republicans to contact**

Note: for email, some senators require inputting a zip code from their state

**Susan Collins**

413 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510  
(202) 224-2523

[www.collins.senate.gov/contact](http://www.collins.senate.gov/contact)

**Jeff Flake**

413 Russell Senate Office Building Washington DC 20510

(202) 224-4521

**Richard Burr**

217 Russell Senate Office Building Washington DC 20510

(202) 224-3154

Contact: [www.burr.senate.gov/contact/email](https://www.burr.senate.gov/contact/email)

**Ben Sasse**

136 Russell Senate Office Building Washington DC 20510

(202) 224-4224

Contact: [www.sasse.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/email-ben](http://www.sasse.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/email-ben)

**John McCain**

218 Russell Senate Office Building

Washington, DC 20510

(202) 224-2235

[www.mccain.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/contact-form](https://www.mccain.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/contact-form)

# **Fair Taxes in Washington State**

# **From the League of Women Voters (LWV)**

**Summary: Are your taxes fair? No, they are upside down. Speak up now.**

**Talking Points:**

* A significant number of our citizens are paying up to 17% of their income in taxes to support the services of our local and state government. Meanwhile the very wealthy and big business are continually having their share of taxes significantly reduced. Some are paying nothing. Our vast reliance on the sales tax, (1/2 of the revenue for the state Operating budget) makes Washington state the most unfair (regressive) tax state in the US.
* Today, the vast majority of our people in Washington State are suffering from stagnating wages and spiraling costs for housing, education, transportation and healthcare. They are at the same time experiencing a drop in government services such as tuition support for higher education, and a drop in government support for transportation like ferries, bridges, freeways. These decreases in government support are being passed on to the citizen in the form of fees, tolls and costs. Government support is also diminishing in its ability to protect us from threats to the environment. At the same time, as a result to the 2008 depression, Washingtonians face the escalating needs of increasing numbers of people found on the streets (which happens when rents increase by 25%; wages 5%,) and people suffering health devastation from alcohol and opiate drug abuse. Meeting these needs in our communities are not being matched or met with support from the government.
* Let’s be fair by sharing the costs of government services used by all, and let’s protect the valuable natural resources of our state with the goal to protect the health and welfare of all who live and work here.
* Let’s make our upside down tax system right side up.

**Our MoCs:**

* Find your District: [*http://app.leg.wa.gov/DistrictFinder/*](http://app.leg.wa.gov/DistrictFinder/)
* Find who represents you in the House: [*http://leg.wa.gov/house/Pages/default.aspx*](http://leg.wa.gov/house/Pages/default.aspx)
* Find out who represents you in the Senate: [*http://leg.wa.gov/senate/Pages/default.aspx*](http://leg.wa.gov/senate/Pages/default.aspx)

**To Do:**

* Call or write your representative to tell them your story and voice your opinion.
* Possible script:
* Dear Representative / Senator
* In a time of great need, please take action to make our tax system more fair and adequate to meet the needs of our state. We must all share in the costs and benefits of living in Washington. Let’s change our upside down tax system and begin moving up the ladder known as the most regressive tax state in the US to become a state known as a state that is fair for everyone.

**Steve Hodes’ Issue Update—January 31**

1. **Russia connection**

***Trump ordered Mueller fired in June, backed off when the White House counsel threatened to quit:*** The New York Times reported that Trump ordered the firing last June of special counsel Mueller, but ultimately backed down after the White House counsel threatened to resign rather than carry out the order.

After first wave [of news media reports](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/special-counsel-is-investigating-trump-for-possible-obstruction-of-justice/2017/06/14/9ce02506-5131-11e7-b064-828ba60fbb98_story.html?hpid=hp_hp-banner-low_trumpmueller625pm%3Ahomepage%2Fstory&utm_term=.e409678dca35) that Mueller was examining a possible obstruction case, Trump began to argue that Mueller had three conflicts of interest that disqualified him from overseeing the investigation. One was that [a dispute](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trumps-lawyers-seek-to-undercut-muellers-russia-investigation/2017/07/20/232ebf2c-6d71-11e7-b9e2-2056e768a7e5_story.html?utm_term=.a2fb8f467c8a) years ago over fees at Trump National Golf Club in Virginia had prompted Mueller to resign his membership. The second was that Mueller could not be impartial because he had most recently worked for the law firm that [previously represented](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/18/business/jared-kushner-trump-russia-election-investigation.html) Jared Kushner. The third was that Mueller had been interviewed to return as the FBI director the day before he was appointed special counsel.

After receiving Trump’s order to fire Mueller, Don McGahn, the White House counsel refused to ask the Justice Department to dismiss the special counsel, saying he would quit instead. McGahn did not deliver his threat to quit directly to Trump. McGahn disagreed with Trump’s case and told senior White House officials that firing Mueller would have a catastrophic effect on Trump’s presidency. McGahn was also concerned that firing the special counsel would incite more questions about whether the White House was trying to obstruct the Russia investigation. McGahn also told White House officials that Mr. Trump would not follow through on the dismissal on his own. Trump then backed off.

Another option that Trump considered in discussions with his advisers was dismissing the deputy attorney general, Rod Rosenstein, who appointed and oversees the special counsel and elevating the department’s third-ranking official, Rachel Brand, to oversee Mueller. Rosenstein oversees the Russia investigation given Attorney General Sessions having recused himself from overseeing the investigation.

NBC just reported that one reason for Trump’s anger at Rosenstein was that he had watched the extensive video coverage of Comey’s traveling back to DC on an FBI jet after receiving word that he had been fired. Trump blamed Rosenstein for allowing Comey to use an FBI jet, which he believed caused the negative press coverage.

***Democrats now demand protection of Mueller from Trump, Republicans still go slow:*** The Washington Post reported that congressional Democrats on January 26 demanded that Congress act to protect Mueller after the press reported that Trump sought to fire him in the summer of 2017. Some Democrats and a moderate Republicans called for votes on Senate legislation that would prevent presidents from firing special counsels unless a panel of three federal judges agreed with the move, or that would allow a special counsel to appeal a firing to court after the fact. Key Senate Republicans and House leadership showed no urgency to act even after the news came out that Trump had tried to fire Mueller. A key Senate roadblock has been Judiciary Chairman Chuck Grassley, who said he has constitutional concerns with the proposed bills.

***Andrew McCabe leaves FBI Deputy Director post early under pressure from FBI Director Wray:*** The Washington Post reported that Andrew McCabe, deputy director of the FBI, is stepping down from that job early. It had been reported that McCabe had plans as early as 2015 to retire when he qualified for his pension in mid-March 2018. He reaffirmed those plans in December. But he instead retired in January.

McCabe has come under sustained attack from Trump, conservative House Republicans and conservative media for months. The attacks ostensibly focused on his wife’s run for a Virginia legislative seat with assistance from a PAC controlled by the Terry McAuliffe, the former Democratic governor of Virginia who is a close ally of the Clintons. In normal times, this would not be considered a conflict of interest. There is significant concern from Democrats and some Senate Republicans because a) McCabe was one of the people former FBI director Comey shared his memos on Trump meetings with; b) Trump has made clear his interest eliminating the independence of the Justice Department and FBI and making it serve his personal interests; and c) because Trump had personally singled McCabe out for attack.

The New York Times reported that McCabe told friends that he felt pressure from FBI Director Christopher Wray to resign. Wray talked to McCabe about concerns about a forthcoming inspector general report examining the actions of McCabe and other senior FBI officials during the 2016 campaign when the FBI was investigating both Hillary Clinton’s email server and the Trump campaign’s ties to Russia. In the discussion, Wray suggested moving McCabe into another job, which would have been a demotion. Instead, McCabe decided to leave. The departure was not announced at the FBI. Wray named the FBI’s number 3 official, David Bowdich, as acting deputy.

***Justice Department inspector general probe looks at McCabe’s role in the final weeks of the 2016 election:*** The Washington Post reported that the Justice Department’s inspector general has been focused for months on why Andrew McCabe, as the number 2 official at the FBI, didn’t act for three weeks on a request to examine a batch of Hillary Clinton-related emails found in the late weeks of the 2016 election campaign. Michael Horowitz, the inspector general, has been asking witnesses why FBI leadership seemed unwilling to move forward on the examination of emails found on the laptop of former congressman Anthony Weiner until late October, about three weeks after first being alerted to the issue. A key question of the internal investigation is whether McCabe or anyone else at the FBI wanted to avoid taking action on the laptop findings until after the November 8 election, these people said. It is unclear whether the inspector general has reached any conclusions on that point. A major line of inquiry for the inspector general has been trying to determine who at the FBI and the Justice Department knew about the Clinton emails on the Weiner laptop, and when they learned about them. McCabe is a central figure in those inquiries. Horowitz’s report is expected in the spring.

***House Intelligence Committee Republicans defy Justice Department, send their memo based on classified information to Trump:*** The Washington Post and Politico reported the Republicans on the House Intelligence Committee defied the Justice Department and all voted to release a 4-page classified memo prepared by Devin Nunes’ staff. Committee Republicans say the memo will reveal misconduct by senior FBI officials involved in investigating Trump's campaign. The memo is said to argue that when the FBI sought a FISA warrant on Carter Page, who worked on the Trump campaign, that they did not inform the FISA court judge that the warrant was based on information in the Christopher Steele dossier and that the dossier was funded by the DNC and Clinton campaign. It is further alleged to say that the renewal of the warrant was approved by Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein.

Democrats say that the memo cherry-picked classified information leaving out other relevant information and context. They argue that the memo is part of the attempt by House Republicans to argue that the real danger is a supposed out-of-control FBI and Justice Department rather than Russian interference in the 2016 election and possible collusion by the Trump campaign. Democrats also say that it is possible that Republicans will use the memo to try to make the case for Trump to fire Rod Rosenstein, who oversees the Mueller investigation, to try to install someone more compliant, who could fire Mueller or limit the scope of his investigation.

The committee's ability to disclose classified intelligence is set out in a House rule that has never been used. It dictates that if the committee votes to publicly release the classified memo, its fate moves to the hands of Trump, who would have five days to weigh the request. Trump can approve its immediate release or, if he takes no action, the committee can release it. Should he object, the committee can forward the request to the full House, which would meet in a closed-door session for a vote on its release.

It appears almost certain that Trump will release the memo. While Sarah Huckabee Sanders insisted that there would be a deliberative process with national security agencies involved, saying that “there are no current plans” to release the memo and that Trump had not “seen or been briefed” on the memos contents, Trump himself was caught on camera telling Republican congressman after the State of the Union to not worry, that he would “100 percent” release the memo. Chief of Staff Kelly said on Fox News radio that it would be “released here pretty quick” as soon as the White House national security lawyers finish “slicing and dicing and looking at it so we know what it means.”

Prior to the committee vote, the Justice Department said that the public release of the memo prior to review by the FBI and Justice Department given that it might reveal classified sources or methods and so cause national security problems or that that might be inaccuracies. They have also argued that the release without prior review there might be a risk to ongoing investigations. Republican committee members have already voted to share the memo with members of Congress. Democrats charge that Republicans are making an unprecedented push to declassify material for partisan gain, noting that the panel has never before voted to disclose classified information.

Tray Gowdy was the only Republican member of Congress to review the underlying intelligence the memo is based on. He says it supports the memo. Ranking member Adam Schiff is the only other member of Congress to review the underlying intelligence. He says the memo cherry-picks disconnected items to make an argument not supported by the full record.

***House Intelligence Committee Republicans refuse to release memo by Democrats on the committee that counters committee Republican memo:*** The Washington Post reported that Republicans on the House Intelligence Committee voted not to allow the release of a 10-page memo prepared by committee Democrats based on Adam Schiff’s review of the underlying intelligence. The Democrats’ say their memo lays out the facts of the underlying intelligence and shows how the Nunes’ staff memo distorts the work of the FBI and the Department of Justice. In effect, the committee Republicans want only their side of the story to be made public.

***FBI challenged the accuracy of the House Republican Intelligence committee memo:*** The Washington Post reported that that FBI challenged the accuracy of the House Republican Intelligence Committee memo. The FBI said that it had “grave concerns about the material omissions of fact that fundamentally impact the memo’s accuracy.” It said it carefully follows the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) that provides a legal framework for national security investigations. It said that the FBI “takes seriously its obligations to the FISA Court and its compliance with procedures overseen by career professionals in the Department of Justice and the FBI” and that it is “committed to working with the appropriate oversight entities to ensure the continuing integrity of the FISA process.’’

***House Republican Intelligence memo appears aimed at Rod Rosenstein:*** The New York Times reported that the memo reveals that Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein approved an application to renew a FISA surveillance warrant on Carter Page shortly after taking office last spring. In order for the FISA court to approve a warrant renewal, the Justice Department would have to show what the initial warrant produced. The renewal shows that the Justice Department under Trump saw reason to believe that Carter Page was acting as a Russian agent. The reference to Rosenstein’s actions in the memo indicates that Republicans may move to focus on his role as a way to undermine the Russia investigation.

Republicans may use Rosenstein’s decision to approve the renewal to say that he failed to properly vet a highly sensitive application for a warrant to spy on Page, who served as a Trump foreign policy adviser until September 2016. A handful of senior Justice Department officials can approve an application to FISA court, but in practice that responsibility often falls to the deputy attorney general. No information has publicly emerged that the Justice Department or the FBI did anything improper while seeking the surveillance warrant involving Page. Because Attorney General Sessions has recused himself, only Rosenstein can fire or limit the Mueller investigation.

***Mark Warner says document dumps raised new questions:*** Politico reported that Warner, ranking Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee said that end-of-the-year document dumps produced very significant revelations that opened a lot of new questions that Senate investigators are now looking into. Warner says the committee still cannot attest to their truthfulness and is now trying to either corroborate or not by calling up to a dozen new witnesses.

Warner said he has read the underlying classified material used in the Nunes memo and that Nunes misrepresented it as part of an effort to discredit the FBI probe of the president.He said that the Nunes memo, apparently drawn from information contained in the same late-2017 document dumps that have caused the Senate panel to expand its inquiry, is based on fabrications and “connecting dots that don’t connect”.

Warner said that a bipartisan majority on the panel is now in agreement on the basic facts of the case. He said that virtually every member of the committee would agree that Russia sought to intervene in 2016 on Trump’s behalf with traditional spycraft, stealing information and then releasing it, along with not-so-traditional methods of using social media platforms, compromising state voting systems and offering dirt on Trump’s 2016 opponent Hillary Clinton.

***Mueller investigators have interviewed 20 members of White House staff:*** The Washington Post reported that over 20 White House officials have voluntarily given interviews to Mueller investigators. The White House has turned over 20,000 pages of documents to Mueller’s team. They include documents related to fired FBI director Comey and Michael Flynn.

***Russians got tens of thousands of Americans to RSVP for phony political events on Facebook:*** The Washington Post reported that Russian operatives used Facebook to publicize 129 phony event announcements during the 2016 presidential campaign, drawing the attention of nearly 340,000 users, many of whom said they were planning to attend, according to a Facebook document released by the Senate Intelligence Committee on January 25.

***Senate Judiciary Committee to release transcripts of interviews with Donald Jr., others:*** The Washington Post reported that the Chuck Grassley, chair of the Senate Judiciary committee plans to release the transcripts of its interviews with Donald Jr. and others who participated in the June 2016 Trump Tower meeting with a Russian lawyer and others ostensibly to get dirt on Hillary Clinton. He said the transcripts must be redacted and it is not clear when that will be completed and the transcripts can be released.

The committee spoke with Donald Jr. in September, and in the last several months has also interviewed other participants in the Trump Tower meeting, including music promoter Rob Goldstone, Russian American lobbyist Rinat Akhmetshin, US-based Russian real estate company employee Ike Kaveladze, and Anatoli Samochornov, the translator for Russian lawyer Natalia Veselnitskaya, who answered the committee’s questions in writing. The committee did not interview Jared Kushner or Paul Manafort.

Grassley said that the panel’s chances of getting a voluntary interview with Mr. Kushner were compromised when Dianne Feinstein unilaterally released the transcript of the panel’s interview with Fusion GPS founder Glenn Simpson. Grassley has also privately blamed Feinstein for costing the committee an interview with Manafort in July. Feinstein denies the claim and has faulted Grassley for failing to subpoena Manafort’s testimony. Kushner and Manafort have spoken with the Senate Intelligence Committee. Grassley said he hoped that Feinstein, who also sits on the Intelligence Committee, could broker a deal for Grassley to be able to view the transcript of that committee’s interview with Kushner, as she did with Manafort.  Intelligence Committee chairman Richard Burr has thus far resisted Grassley’s requests to share the transcript.

***Justice Department inspector general recovers missing FBI officials’ texts:*** The Washington Post reported that the Department of Justice inspector general has recovered missing text messages from two senior FBI officials (Peter Strzok and Lisa Page) who participated in the Hillary Clinton email investigation and the Russia investigation and exchanged texts critical of Trump (along with ones critical of most political leaders). Inspector General Michael Horowitz said his office succeeded in using forensic tools to recover messages between the FBI staffers during a key five-month period ending the day special counsel Mueller was appointed to investigate possible coordination between Russia and Trump’s campaign. The missing messages were embroiled in controversy as Republican leaders and Trump have raised questions about how the FBI could have failed to retain the messages/ Horowitz did not indicate how many messages were recovered and said his effort to locate more was ongoing. He said he would provide copies to the Justice Department, and he would have no objection if leaders there turned them over to Congress if they felt it was appropriate.

Horowitz has been investigating Strzok’s and Page’s conduct as part of his office’s investigation into the handling of the probe into Clinton’s use of a private email server when she was secretary of state. Both Page and Strzok worked on the Clinton case and the probe, led by Mueller, into whether agents of Russia may have coordinated with Trump associates to try to meddle with the 2016 presidential election. In recent weeks, the Justice Department has provided Congress with hundreds of pages of their messages. Congress was notified last week that the FBI could not find five months’ worth of texts between the two officials. The FBI had told the Justice Department that many FBI-provided Samsung 5 mobile devices did not capture or store text messages due to misconfiguration issues related to rollouts, provisioning and software upgrades that conflicted with the FBI’s collection capabilities. As a result, data that should have been automatically collected and retained for long-term storage and retrieval was not collected.  A Justice Department official said that [the FBI failed to save text messages sent from thousands of cellphones](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/fbi-failed-to-save-texts-from-thousands-of-phones-in-snafu-that-affected-officials-once-on-mueller-team/2018/01/24/2e47507a-0157-11e8-9d31-d72cf78dbeee_story.html?utm_term=.e22719af94d7).

***Judge rejects secrecy in Kushner apartments case:*** Politico reported that in a pending lawsuit claiming that Maryland apartment complexes owned or managed by Jared Kushner’s companies collected illegal fees from tenants, US District Court Judge James Bredar sided with five news organizations who urged that the businesses be required to provide details on their ownership structure on the public record. He ordered the disclosures to take place within two weeks.

1. **Immigration**

***Trump demands major changes in immigration law in exchange for legalizing Dreamers:*** The New York Times and NPR reported that the White House released an immigration proposal that would trade a 10-12 year path to citizenship for Dreamers (DACA recipients) but only in exchange for major changes in legal immigration. The White House plan was reportedly written by John Kelly and Stephen Miller. Press stories about the plan say it would offer a path to citizenship for Dreamers, both the 700,000 currently in the program and others who would qualify (for a total estimate of 1.8 million). It would require that Dreamers remain productive and not violate other laws.

In exchange, the White House wants an immigration measure to include $25 billion for a border wall, to fund a combination of physical infrastructure, technology, personnel and resources. The plan would also provide for expedited removal for people who overstay their visas, meaning no hearing before an immigration judge. This would also apply to anyone crossing the border illegally. It wants additional funds for new immigration personnel, ICE attorneys, immigration judges, prosecutors and other immigration staff. The administration wants to eliminate the visa lottery system, which brings 50,000 people a year to the US from countries that do not send most people to the US.

The White House also wants changes to the legal immigration system, including policies that limit family reunification under the legal immigration system to only spouses and minor children. Currently, a citizen may sponsor their spouse, unmarried minor kids, adult children, parents, and siblings. Legal permanent residents may sponsor their spouses, minor kids, and adult children. Within these categories there are preferences. While the United States caps the numbers of family visas it hands out every year at roughly a quarter of a million, there are some high-preference categories that are not subject to these caps, so every year half a million green cards are handed out due to family reunification. The laws governing this system have been in place for fifty years.

***Schumer and Pelosi both reject White House immigration plan:*** Politico reported that Chuck Schumer opposes the White House immigration framework. He accused Trump of using a proposed path for citizenship for Dreamers as cover for making sweeping and damaging changes to the legal immigration system. Nancy Pelosi called it anti-immigrant and said it would not receive support from House Democrats. One Democratic House member said it was not an immigration proposal but a ransom note. A bipartisan group of senators plans to continue meeting over the next two weeks to try to strike a deal that can pass the Senate with overwhelming support, with hopes that would force the House to swallow it and Trump to sign it. But Republican and Democratic lawmakers are also meeting separately in partisan groups, making the prospects of a bipartisan deal deal unclear given the political tensions in Congress over immigration and following the shutdown. Mitch McConnell has committed to an immigration debate in February, but members have no idea where they will start. It could even be a bill that is constructed solely through the amendment process.

***Some Republican and Democratic members of Congress urge Trump to narrow his immigration demands:*** The Washington Post reported that some members of Congress of both parties are worried that Trump’s immigration demands will result in no fix for DACA. They have urged that the immigration debate should focus on DACA legalization and border security, and have said that Trump’s focus on cutting legal immigration would be likely to sink a deal. They have said that Trump’s proposal is a wish-list for immigration hard-liners. The White House rejected the criticism.

1. **Budget**

***Congress appears unlikely to reach a long-term spending plan by February 8 budget deadline:*** Politico reports that doubts are growing that Democrats and Republicans can reach a long-term spending deal by the February 8 deadline for a new spending bill. Both sides are publicly blaming each other. Republicans say Democrats are divided over whether they can agree to a budget accord without a solution for DACA. Democrats, meanwhile, say Republicans are getting nervous about increasing defense and domestic spending by more than $100 billion. Congress is in session for only two days this week before House and Senate Republicans leave for their annual retreat. This would leave only three days to come up with a solution for raising budget caps on military and domestic spending. While Chuck Schumer prefers to handle immigration and spending at the same time, he but has not vowed to kill a budget deal that lacks a DACA fix, and other Senate Democrats have agreed to sever immigration from the budget. Nancy Pelosi has continued to insist the two issues be linked. Democrats are demanding that any increase in defense spending be accompanied by dollar-for-dollar increases in non-defense Democratic priorities. Leaders are discussing equivalent increases in both, but some conservatives are uncomfortable with such drastic hikes in spending.

House Republicans will pass a defense spending bill with a significant increase in defense spending. Mitch McConnell plans a vote on the defense bill as soon as next week. That will force Democrats to vote against a defense increase while also showing House Republicans that a defense-only budget deal will not pass the Senate. To avoid a shutdown next week, House Republicans are reluctantly preparing to pass another short-term spending bill that moves the deadline further into February or into March.

***Trump plans to ask for $716 billion for military spending in 2019 and abandon focus on deficit:*** The Washington Post reported that Trump is expected to ask for $716 billion in defense spending in his 2019 budget to be released in February. This would include the annual defense budget as well as spending on ongoing wars and the maintenance of the US nuclear arsenal. It would be a 13% increase over 2017 when the US spent $634 billion on defense. Last year, Trump asked for $668 billion for defense and Congress passed a defense authorization bill that would direct $700 billion to defense. The funds authorized have not yet been appropriated. That appropriation would need to take place as a result of the budget negotiations for a long-term budget before the congressional February 8 deadline when the current continuing resolution expires. The 2019 budget would focus on modernizing the military’s aging weapons systems and preparing it for a potential conflict with China and Russia and other world powers after a long emphasis on counterterrorism and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

***White House infrastructure plan would sharply reduce environmental and regulatory requirements*** The Washington Post reported that the Trump administration has drafted [a proposal](http://apps.washingtonpost.com/g/documents/national/white-house-draft-plan-to-streamline-federal-permitting-for-infrastructure-projects/2731/) to scale back environmental requirements in an effort to make it easier to construct roads, bridges and pipelines as part of an infrastructure plan that Trump could release as soon as next week. Administration officials have briefed Republican members of Congress, trade associations and other groups about their plans. They have emphasized they are willing to alter elements of the legislative package to win enough votes to pass it in the Senate. But they are seeking the most sweeping changes in decades to how the federal government approves and oversees infrastructure projects. Critics of the administration said the proposal outlined in the document would gut key environmental protections in laws dating to the 1970s including as the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act as well as the Administrative Procedures Act (APA). The administration plan identifies many aspects of the current permitting process that lead to delays, including the fact that multiple agencies often weigh in on the same permit and that the federal government lacks resources to assess projects in a timely manner. It would make major changes in the procedures that lie underlie federal oversight of infrastructure projects. New limits and deadlines would be imposed on federal agencies reviewing projects, and some agencies, especially the EPA, would be limited in their ability to weigh in on the permitting process.

1. **State of the Union**

***Trump calls for unity, then demonizes immigrants and threatens war with North Korea:*** The Washington Post and New York Times reported that while the initial portion of Trump’s first State of the Union address was a call for unity, it was followed by demonization of immigrants, starting with extensive descriptions of people killed by the MS-13 gang with relatives in the chamber and attacks on current immigration law. He misleadingly called his extreme immigration proposals a compromise. He then spent a long time attacking the North Korean regime as cruel and inhumane, appearing to open the door for an attack on North Korea. Trump made some other policy proposals, but they lacked much clarity. For example, he called for a $1.5 trillion infrastructure package but did not suggest where funding should come from.

1. **Trade**

***US international trade panel strikes down 300% tariff on Canadian jets:*** The Washington Post reported that a US International Trade Commission (ITC) panel unanimously struck down 300% tariffs against Canada’s Bombardier narrow-body jets. Boeing was the major loser in the decision.

By voting in Bombardier’s favor, the four judges on the ITC panel have certified that they do not believe Boeing’s business has been materially harmed by Bombardier’s trade practices, a key qualifier for imposing tariffs. The fight over imported jets stemmed from a $5 billion deal struck between Bombardier and Atlanta-based Delta Air Lines in 2016 for 75 CS100 commercial airplanes. Boeing argues that Bombardier’s deal with Delta is a violation of US trade laws against dumping, selling products abroad at a lower price than they would be sold at home. Boeing also alleges that Bombardier is propped up by unfair government subsidies that allow it to undercut foreign competitors. Bombardier has countered that Boeing benefits from subsidies in the United States, including federal contracts and tax breaks from state governments.

Whether the Bombardier planes are direct competitors with Boeing planes was a key question in Friday’s ruling. Boeing argues that Bombardier’s C Series planes compete with its 737 MAX 7, a narrow-body commercial jetliner, something Bombardier denies. Boeing officials have said they tried to resolve their concerns diplomatically before Donald Trump took office, to little success. The dispute heated up late last year when the US Commerce Department issued preliminary rulings in Boeing’s favor, levying 300% tariffs on jets imported from Canada. The tariff] effectively quadrupled the price that airlines such as Delta would have to pay when they acquire new CS100 model planes.

The Canadian government has already retaliated against Boeing. Late last year, Canadian officials made good on an earlier threat to cancel a proposed purchase of F/A-18 Super Hornet fighter planes, dealing a blow to Boeing’s defense contracting business, which was already hurting from losses on giant US defense contracts for the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter and the B-21 Raider.

The dispute took a twist in mid-October when Bombardier agreed to sell the C Series plane to Airbus. In a sign of Bombardier’s financial difficulties, the company handed over a controlling stake as part of a deal that included no cash payment. As part of the deal, the companies promised to shift future production of the plane from Canada to Mobile, Alabama. Airbus’s executives argued that moving production in that way should allow them to avoid the tariff.

1. **Regulation**

***Trump appointee trying to squelch NLRB staff:*** The New York Times reported that the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) has proposed to demote the senior civil servants who resolve most labor cases. Under the proposal, those civil servants would answer to a small group of officials installed above them in the NLRB hierarchy. The proposal could pave the way for a pronounced shift in the day-to-day workings of the agency, making it friendlier to employers named in complaints of unfair labor practices or facing unionization drives.

Peter Robb, the agency’s general counsel and a Trump appointee, outlined the proposal this month in a conference call with the civil servants, known as regional directors. The regional directors and their staffs typically resolve more than 85 percent of the roughly 20,000 cases filed with the agency each year over disputed labor practices without involving the general counsel, the top enforcement official.

The proposal follows a series of aggressive changes in posture at the agency since last fall, when Republicans gained a majority on the five-member board. Demoting the regional directors (there are 26, including two vacancies) and inserting a new group above them would most likely require board approval. The regional directors’ account suggested that the new officials would probably be civil servants as well, rather than political appointees.

***Betsy DeVos sued over sexual assault guidance:*** The New York Times reported that victims’ rights and women’s rights groups sued Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, saying that rules that she issued last year to guide campuses on how to manage sexual assault complaints violated federal law and discriminated against accusers. Three organizations, represented by prominent civil rights litigators, filed a complaint in the Northern District of California outlining ways that the guidance [issued by DeVos in the fall](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/22/us/devos-colleges-sex-assault.html) had had a “chilling effect” on campus sexual assault investigations. Since the guidance was issued, the groups charged, accusers have been less inclined to pursue sexual assault cases, and colleges have demonstrated a lack of urgency and clarity in pursuing them. In September, [DeVos rescinded Obama-era guidance](https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/department-education-issues-new-interim-guidance-campus-sexual-misconduct) on how colleges should manage the investigations under Title IX, the federal law that prohibits sex discrimination and governs the rules on investigating sexual assault on campus.

***DC Appeals Court upholds the constitutionality of Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB):*** Politico reported that the DC Circuit Court of Appeals ruled 7-3 that a provision in the Dodd-Frank law that limits the president’s ability to remove the CFPB director during his or her 5-year term does not violate the president’s authority to appoint and remove executive branch officers. The ruling was largely along ideological lines, with one George Bush appointee joining all the Democratic-appointed judges in upholding the consumer bureau's structure. The three dissenting judges were all Republican appointees.

In November, Richard Cordray, who was appointed CFPB director by then-President Barack Obama, resigned and designated his deputy, Leandra English, as acting head of the agency. The same day, President Donald Trump named his budget chief, Mick Mulvaney, as the CFPB’s acting head. English and others have filed lawsuits challenging Mulvaney's appointment, but no court has stepped in to block Trump’s move. The same court that ruled in today’s decision will hear English’s appeal to halt any further action by Mulvaney as acting director of the bureau. Mulvaney has taken a number of steps to rein in the bureau since he took over, including requesting no additional funding from the Federal Reserve for the CFPB for the second quarter of fiscal year 2018.

Wednesday's decision involved a case brought by PHH Corp., a New Jersey mortgage service provider that the CFPB targeted for an enforcement action in 2015. PHH challenged the bureau’s structure in court and initially won a ruling in its favor. It’s likely that PHH will appeal the decision to the Supreme Court. They were represented in court by Ted Olson.

1. **Abortion**

***Republican House votes for 20-week abortion limit, Senate defeats the bill:*** The Hill reported that Republicans in House of Representatives won the vote to ban abortions after 22 weeks (rather than at viability, before the date that the Supreme Court mandated in Roe v. Wade. Such a change was intended both to energize the Republican base and to set up a possible Supreme Court case that could overturn Roe. The bill failed in the Senate in a vote 51-49 vote when 60 votes were required. Three Democrats voted for the bill: Robert Casey of Pennsylvania, Joe Donnelly of Indiana and Joe Manchin of West Virginia. Two Republicans voted against it: Susan Collins of Maine and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska.

1. **Corruption**

***Judge seems open to emoluments suit against Trump:*** Politico reported that US District Court Judge Peter Messitte indicated that he was not persuaded by aspects of a ruling by a judge in New York City dismissing an emoluments case against Trump. Messitte said he thought US District Court Judge George Daniels was too quick to cast aside arguments that competitors to Trump's businesses have legal standing to challenge benefits he's receiving from his hotels, buildings and other ventures. Messitte noted that Daniels did not include any analysis in his decision on that issue. Messitte suggested that Daniels' decision won't be of much benefit to Trump in the suit filed last June by the State of Maryland and DC. In that suit, DC and Maryland argue that they're being injured in various ways, including through unfair competition from the Trump International Hotel with convention centers in Washington, Baltimore and Bethesda, as well as the MGM Casino at National Harbor. Maryland also says it's losing tax revenue when the Trump hotel draws room and event bookings from private businesses in the state.

Messitte noted that the legal issue at the moment isn't whether DC and Maryland have proved their case, but whether the allegations are substantial enough for the case to proceed to the discovery stage, which could involve a detailed examination of the Trump hotel's financial records and those of other businesses.The suit brought by DC and Maryland complains that Trump is violating two separate constitutional clauses: one that prohibits a president from receiving emoluments from individual states and another that prohibits federal officials from receiving gifts or other payment from foreign nations, absent approval from Congress.While Messitte seemed inclined to allow the case before him to proceed, the judge repeatedly expressed concern that the suit names Trump in his official capacity as president, even though the complaints revolve around his business dealings. The judge said he might give DC and Maryland the chance to amend their suit to name Trump personally.

1. **Environment**

***Inslee rejects permit for Vancouver oil-by-rail terminal:*** The Associated Press reported that Governor Inslee rejected a permit for what would have been the largest oil-by-rail terminal in the US. He said the record shows the risks and impacts outweighed the need for and potential benefits of the project. Inslee agreed with the recommendation of the Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council (EFSEC), which unanimously voted in November to recommend that the Vancouver Energy project in southwest Washington be denied. Inslee said among the issues that led him to his decision were seismic risks at the site, the potential for an oil spill and the risk that a fire or explosion at the facility would harm workers and the community.

EFSEC found that many of the risks it identified could be decreased with certain mitigation measures, but it found four areas where it said the impacts are significant and cannot be mitigated. Those risks were train accidents, emergency response delays, negative impacts on low-income communities and the possibility that an earthquake would damage the facility's dock and cause an oil spill. EFSEC found that for those issues, it is not possible to adequately mitigate the risks, or eliminate or minimize the adverse impacts of the facility to an acceptable level. It concluded that developers didn't meet the burden to show that the project proposed at the port of Vancouver site would produce a net benefit in balancing the need for energy and the impact to the public.

Developers have said the terminal is needed to bring crude oil from North Dakota to a western US port to meet fuel demands and projected energy needs. They've argued that it could be built safely and would secure a reliable supply of energy for the state. Project developers have 30 days to appeal the governor's decision in state court.

***In reversal, EPA deals setback to gold mining proposal that would pollute Bristol Bay:*** The Washington Post reported that the EPA, in a surprise decision, announced that it will not scrap the agency’s 2014 determination that a large-scale mining operation could irreparably harm Alaska’s Bristol Bay water­shed. The decision, which falls short of blocking a proposed gold and copper mine in the region outright, represents a surprising twist in a years-long battle that has pitted a Canadian-owned mining company against commercial fishing operators, native Alaskans and conservationists determined to protect the world’s largest sockeye salmon fishery.

Last spring, shortly after meeting with the top executive from the project’s main backer, Northern Dynasty Minerals, Scott Pruitt directed EPA staff to revisit the Obama-era decision to short-circuit the project using a provision of the Clean Water Act. The 2014 decision came after several years of scientific study during which the EPA determined that the mining operation could cause significant and irreversible harm to the area’s fish habitat. After receiving more than a million public comments and consulting with tribal governments and others, EPA said it will leave the previous administration’s determination in place while it takes additional comments.

Pruitt said that any mining projects in the region likely pose a risk to the Bristol Bay fisheries. that exist there and that until the full extent of that risk is known, those fisheries deserve protection. Pebble Limited Partnership has eyed the spot in southwestern Alaska, where the headwaters of several rivers converge, as a possible mine site for more than 15 years. But Northern Dynasty Minerals didn’t file its first formal application for a federal permit until December. Southwestern Alaska contains a reservoir of gold worth an estimated $120 billion. The lakes and tributaries in the region feed into Bristol Bay and a fishery that generates $500 million a year.

***Oceans temperature in 2017 hottest on record:*** The Guardian reported that researchers have found that the upper than 6,000 feet of ocean waters were far warmer in 2017 than the previous hottest year. Heat energy is measured in joules. 2017 was a record-breaking year, 1.51x10t o the 22nd joules hotter than any other year. For comparison, the annual electrical generation in China is 600 times smaller than the heat increase in the ocean. The hottest years on record are 2017, 2015, 2016, 2014 and 2013.

1. **International**

***Trump threatens aid to Palestinians:*** The Washington Post reported that Trump threatened to withdraw US aid to the Palestinians if they do not resume negotiating with Israel. Trump said that the issue of Jerusalem is “off the table” given his decision to recognize it as the capital of Israel and move the US embassy to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv. A State Department official confirmed that all US aid to the Palestinians is under review, though nothing has been decided other than a previously announced $100 million cut to the United Nations agency that focuses on Palestinian needs. The UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East made up about half of the $700 million the United States donated last year, most of it for economic programs.

***Czech Republic reelects pro-Russian populist as president over pro-EU candidate:*** The New York Times reported that the election in the Czech Republic resulted in the reelection of President Milos Zeman, a right-wing populist who has increased resentment toward Muslims. His opponent, Jiri Drahos, was a political newcomer whose views were not well known, who sought to present himself as an antidote to what he characterized as Zeman’s bitter and divisive leadership***.*** Drahos offered a firm commitment not just to the country’s membership in the European Union, but also to the its values. In rejecting him, the Czech Republic is continuing in the same euro-skeptic and authoritarian direction as other former Soviet eastern European countries neighbors [Hungary](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/08/world/europe/eu-gives-hungary-a-month-to-adopt-its-democratic-norms.html), Poland and [Slovakia](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/19/world/europe/europe-neo-fascist-revival-slovakia.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FSlovakia&action=click&contentCollection=world&region=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=8&pgtype=collection).

With more than 99 percent of the votes counted, Zeman was the winner with 51.4% of the votes (2.8 million votes), compared with Mr. Drahos’s 48.6% (2.7 million votes). In recent years, Zeman has strengthened the country’s ties with Russia and has courted China.

In the Czech Republic, the government is run by the Prime Minister. The Presidency is largely ceremonial. However, Zeman’s open anti-Muslim and openly racist remarks have had an effect on Czech politics and public debate.

1. **Politics**

***Rodney Frelinghuysen, House Appropriations chairman, to retire:*** The Washington Post reported that Rodney Frelinghuysen, chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, will retire from Congress at the end of this term. This brings to nine the number of House committee chairs that are resigning, and to 33 the number of Republicans who have decided to resign at the end of this term. Frelinghuysen was elected in 1994 and represents New Jersey suburbs and exurbs of New York City. In each of his elections, he has won at least 58% of the vote. His father represented a similar district in New Jersey for 22 years. Trump won less than 49% of the vote in the district.

***Trey Gowdy, House Oversight Committee chair announces plans to retire:*** The Washington Post reported that Trey Gowdy, House Oversight Committee chairman, who chaired the House Benghazi panel, announced his plans to retire at the end of his term, saying he would return to the justice system. His district is heavily Republican, centered around Greenville, South Carolina. This brings to ten the number of House committee chairs that are resigning, and to 34 the number of Republicans who have decided to resign at the end of this term.

***Justice Department seeks to toss out charges against Senator Menendez:*** The Washington Post reported that the Justice Department asked a judge Wednesday to toss out its indictment against Senator Robert Menendez of New Jersey, as anti-corruption prosecutors signaled surrender in the case a week after the judge voided some of the charges against him. The move to dismiss charges is a reversal by the Justice Department. Two weeks earlier, prosecutors had filed notice to the court they intended to keep pursuing the case after the first trial ended in a hung jury. Judge William Walls, who had presided over the first two-month trial, subsequently dismissed seven of the 18 counts in the indictment, but let stand the 11 remaining charges. Menendez’s first trial ended in a mistrial in November, with 10 of the 12 jurors voting to acquit him, according to a member of the jury.

***Democratic group iVote will spend $5 million to elect state-level secretaries of state:*** The liberal ballot access group iVote will spend at least $5 million across swing states to elect Democratic secretaries of state. This year, iVote will focus on electing Democrats as the chief election officials in seven states: Arizona, Colorado, Iowa, Michigan, Nevada, New Mexico and Ohio. Only one of those states, New Mexico, has a Democratic secretary of state. Two of the states, Arizona and Michigan, have not elected Democrats to the office since the 1990s; Colorado has not elected a Democratic secretary of state since the early 1960’s.

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