**Issues/Addresses for 11/24/18**

**EDUCATION**

Documents obtained by the Associated Press indicate that a 2017 Department of Education audit of Navient Corporation, the nation’s third-largest student loan company, boosted its profits by steering borrowers into more expensive plans without discussing options that would have been less costly to the borrowers in the long run. Numerous state and federal level lawsuits have been filed against Navient, but the Department of Education chose not to share the audit findings with plaintiffs, claiming that other state and federal offices have no jurisdiction over Navient’s practices. In other words, the Department of Education has known for over a year of Navient’s unethical practices, and rather than allowing judge to rule on the admissibility of the Department’s findings to suits against Navient has decided to make its own extra-judicial ruling that the plaintiffs do not have standing to file the suits they have and therefore have no right to the evidence—a decision that should be made by the judge(s) handling these suits. Navient, which is disputing the audit’s findings, argues that its contract with the Department of Education does not obligate it does not require that it reveal all (read: cheaper) loan options to borrowers. (Write-up 11/23/18)

**REMIND** the Department of Education that it exists to support quality education, not to maximize corporate profits and **DEMAND** that it restructure any agreements it has with lenders to require that student borrowers be informed of the least expensive loan options available

• **Secretary Betsy DeVos**, U.S. Department of Education, 7W301 LBJ Building, Mail Number 0100, 400 Maryland Ave. SW, Washington DC 20202, (202) 401-3000

**POINT OUT** to our Congresspeople that the Department of Education is neglecting its responsibilities to students borrowers and **SUGGEST** that if the Department of Education won’t do its job, Congressional action is necessary

• **Senator Dianne Feinstein** (D-CA), 331 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-3841

• **Senator Kamala Harris** (D-CA), 112 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-3553

• **Representative Jimmy Panetta** (D-CA), 228 Cannon House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-2861

The Fulbright Program offers competitive fellowships for students, scholars, teachers, scientists and artist that allow recipients to teach, conduct research, or share their talents abroad. It also funds similar grants for citizens of other countries to come to the U.S. This is our country’s most prestigious cultural and educational program, helping local economies, international educations, and, by extension, national security. Historically, the program has had bipartisan support, but in recent years (including during the Obama administration) the program has had to repeatedly fight off draconian cuts. Last year, the Republican administration proposed a 47% cut to the Fulbright program, which was cancelled due to public feedback. Now, the Republican Administration has proposed a 71% cut to the program for the 2019 fiscal year. Given the crucial nature of international cooperation right now—and for the U.S.’s international image—these cuts are unacceptable. (Write-up 11/21/18)

**EXPLAIN** to the Secretary of State and our Congresspeople that cutting the Fulbright is a short-sighted move and **ASK** that funding be increased with the goal of bringing funding back to the 2010 level in real dollars

• **Mike Pompeo**, U.S. Secretary of State, 2201 C St. NW, Washington DC 20520-2204, (202) 647-6575

• **Senator Dianne Feinstein** (D-CA), 331 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-3841

• **Senator Kamala Harris** (D-CA), 112 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-3553

• **Representative Jimmy Panetta** (D-CA), 228 Cannon House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-2861

The ACLU reports that “[t]he Department of Education headed by Secretary Betsy DeVos

[has] released a proposed rule that, if implemented, would dramatically limit schools’ obligations to students who experience sexual violence and would not further the stated goal of fair process. the overwhelming effect of the new rule is to limit schools’ obligations to students who file complaints of sexual harassment and violence under Title IX, a federal civil rights statute that prohibits sex discrimination in education, without increasing the fairness of disciplinary proceedings.” Proposed changes include requiring schools to investigate only the most extreme complaints of sexual violence. Proposed language requires schools to investigate “unwelcome conduct on the basis of sex that is so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access” to education. However, in a departure from past practice, schools would not have to investigate complaints about “unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature” that “limit[s]” but does not “deny,” a student’s ability to learn. The proposed changes would also make schools responsible for investigating only complaints made to specific high-level officials. If complaints were made to others—instructors, coaches, teaching assistants, resident advisers—the school would not be obliged to investigate. (Write-up 11/21/18)

**INSIST** to the Secretary of Education that these harmful rule changes be abandoned

• **Secretary Betsy DeVos**, U.S. Department of Education, 7W301 LBJ Building, Mail Number 0100, 400 Maryland Ave. SW, Washington DC 20202, (202) 401-3000

**ENVIRONMENT**

Andrew Wheeler, who has been acting head of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), has now been nominated to continue as the agency’s head. Wheeler has a long history of being hostile to environmental regulation and has worked as a coal lobbyist. His proposals include lowering emissions standards for coal-fired power plants and reducing efficiency standards for cars and trucks. (Write-up 11/21/18)

**URGE** our Senators to vote against Wheeler’s confirmation

• **Senator Dianne Feinstein** (D-CA), 331 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-3841

• **Senator Kamala Harris** (D-CA), 112 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-3553

Against the warnings of scientists, the Environmental Protection Agency has given a further two years’ approval for the use of the drift-prone weed killer dicamba, which has a history of destroying millions of acres of farm crops. The continued approval came following heavy lobbying by dicamba producers. (Write-up 11/21/18)

**OBJECT** to this decision that puts corporate profits ahead of our nation’s ability to feed itself

• **Andrew Wheeler**, Acting Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, 1200 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington DC 20460, (202) 564-4700

One of the proposals that will likely emerge from the new Congress is an effort to set up a “Green New Deal.” The first step in this process would be establishing a select committee to draft a proposal. Given the persistence and devastating evidence of climate change—and the United Nations report explaining that we have only twelve years left to make meaningful strides against climate change—this is a move that is long overdue. In addition to making the planet healthier for everyone, this could also lead to the development of new industries and more jobs. (Write-up 11/21/18)

**URGE** our Congresspeople to actively support the creation of a Green New Deal select committee

• **Senator Dianne Feinstein** (D-CA), 331 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-3841

• **Senator Kamala Harris** (D-CA), 112 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-3553

• **Representative Jimmy Panetta** (D-CA), 228 Cannon House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-2861

**ETHICS and SEPARATION of POWERS**

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has once again refused to take seriously potential threats against the Mueller investigation of foreign interference in the 2016 Presidential election. In November, he blocked a bipartisan effort led by Republican Jeff Flake and Democrat Chris Coons that would have required a vote on these protections. McConnell continues to claim that such legislation is unnecessary, despite the firing/resignation of Jeff Sessions and Trump’s (probably unconstitutional) decision to replace Sessions with Andrew Whitaker, who has gone on record as opposing the investigation. Following McConnel refusal to allow the vote, Flake, who sits on the Senate Judiciary Committee, said he would block any further judicial confirmations until such a vote has taken place. (Write-up 11/21/18)

**EXPLAIN** (yet again) to Senator McConnell that the health of our democracy is at stake and he has no business blocking a vote on protections for the Mueller investigation

• **Senator Mitch McConnell** (R-KY), 317 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-2541

**THANKS** to the Senators who led this effort—and a **REQUEST** that Flake hold firm on his threat to block judicial nominations

• **Senator Jeff Flake** (R-AZ), 413 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-4521

• **Senator Christopher Coons** (D-DE), 127A Russell Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202)224-5042

**REQUEST** that our Senators defend the Mueller investigation and fight, not just the appointment of Whitaker, but the constitutionality of Trump’s move to appoint him without Congressional approval

• **Senator Dianne Feinstein** (D-CA), 331 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-3841

• **Senator Kamala Harris** (D-CA), 112 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-3553

**FAMILY SEPARATION, DENATURALIZATION, and IMMIGRATION**

The San Francisco Chronicle has reported that more than 14,000 immigrant children are in U.S. custody, 14,056 to be precise, according to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) own records. These children are being held for increasingly length periods because HHS signed an agreement earlier this year to have Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) conduct background checks on potential sponsors for these children. ICE has confirmed that it has been using this information to arrest undocumented relatives of these children who have offered to serve as potential sponsors. Because of the increased number of child detainees this practice has resulted in, HHS is now housing thousands of children in tent facilities in Texas. S.3624, the “Families, Not Facilities Act,” introduced by Kamala Harris would prohibit such sharing of information across agencies, preventing ICE arrests of relatives seeking to sponsor unaccompanied child immigrants. S.3624 is currently with the Senate Judiciary Committee, on which Harris sits. (Write-up 11/19/18)

**CALL FOR** swift, positive action from the Senate Judiciary Committee to end ICE practices that make it more difficult for sponsors to step forward and that result in longer period of detention for children

• **Senator Chick Grassley** (R-IA), Chair, Senate Judiciary Committee, 224 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-5225

• **Senator Dianne Feinstein** (D-CA), Ranking Member, Senate Judiciary Committee, 224 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-5225

• **Senator Kamala Harris** (D- A), Member, Senate Judiciary Committee, 224 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-5225

Back in October, the Associated Press reported the U.S. Army’s discharge of five hundred immigrant enlistees. These enlistees were recruited globally for their language or medical skills and were promised expedited citizenship in exchange for their service. While the existence of such discharges was known, the number of recruits discharged was unclear because the army refused to discuss such cases. However, a September court filing by the Army revealed a total of 502 such discharges. (Write-up 11/19/18)

**DECRY** this betrayal of promises to men and women with valuable skills who served our country honorably while in the military and **DEMAND** an end to such discharges

• **James N. Mattis**, Secretary of Defense 1000 Defense Pentagon Washington, DC 20301-1000, (703) 571-3343

• **Dr. Mark T. Esper**, Secretary of the Army, 101 Army Pentagon, Washington DC 20310-0101, (703) 571-3343

The budget for Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s (ICE) detention and enforcement activities has increased by nearly a billion dollars over the past two years, with ICE funneling money from other programs to detention and enforcement in order to avoid the necessity of a congressional approval to cover budget overruns. There are effective ways to manage asylum seekers that don’t involve the expense and abuses of long-term detention. (Write-up 11/19/18)

**DEMAND** that our Congresspeople oppose both ICE’s practice of using internal bookkeeping to circumvent Congressional approval and ICE’s excessive use of detention for asylum-seekers

• **Senator Dianne Feinstein** (D-CA), 331 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-3841

• **Senator Kamala Harris** (D-CA), 112 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-3553

• **Representative Jimmy Panetta** (D-CA), 228 Cannon House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-2861

A recent report by Amnesty International found that the Republican administration has separated more children from parents than previously reported. At least 200 children are still separated from their families. The government is also detaining unaccompanied teen asylum-seekers in a swiftly growing tent camp/detention center in Texas. This is unacceptable as both fiscal and humanitarian policy. (Write-up 11/19/18)

**TELL** our Congresspeople that we want to see them continue to take fierce, visible action against these injustices

• **Senator Dianne Feinstein** (D-CA), 331 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-3841

• **Senator Kamala Harris** (D-CA), 112 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-3553

• **Representative Jimmy Panetta** (D-CA), 228 Cannon House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-2861

**GENERAL DECENCY**

In California, inmates have served as firefighters, particularly when wildfires have required large influxes of personnel. During the Camp fire, at a time when approximately 9,400 firefighters were on active duty, approximately 1,500 of those firefighters were inmates—that’s more than one in seven of firefighters involved. Inmate firefighters must have less than five years left to serve on their sentences, and those convicted of violent crimes, like murder, rape, and arson, are barred from participating. This service is voluntary, but remains problematic for two reasons. First, these prisoners are paid an average of $2 a day, with an additional $1 per hour, for doing this life-threatening work. Second, because most fire departments in the state bar hiring those convicted of felonies, inmate firefighters are unlikely to be able to use their training once they’ve been released from prison. One effort to raise wages for inmate firefighters calls for Congress to have these firefighters recognized as state workers under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). California legislation that would have directed agencies not to let criminal history be a reason to deny certification and hiring of former inmate firefighters was dropped in favor of legislation that tracks the number of former inmates being denied work as firefighters. (Write-up 11/24/18)

**TELL** our Congresspeople that California appreciates its inmate firefighters and wants to see them treated fairly—which means recognizing them as state workers under the FLSA

• **Senator Dianne Feinstein** (D-CA), 331 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-3841

• **Senator Kamala Harris** (D-CA), 112 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-3553

• **Representative Jimmy Panetta** (D-CA), 228 Cannon House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-2861

**URGE** the incoming California Governor (currently the Lieutenant Governor) to explore how the state’s executive branch can improve pay and subsequent hiring for these skilled individuals

• **Lieutenant Governor Gavin Newsom**, State Capitol, Suite 1114, Sacramento, CA 95814, (916) 445-8994

After ruling that the tribe does not meet the federal definition of “Indian,” the Federal Government is in the process of terminating the reservation of the Mashpee Wampanoag—the tribe that taught the Pilgrims farming techniques and helped them survive their first hard winter in the “new” world. The back story here is convoluted, involving not just the federal definition of “Indian,” but also the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act, which allows Indian lands to be placed into trust with the Department of the Interior (DOI). This process is necessary for land to be identified as Indian Country, which is a prerequisite for the tribe to exercise jurisdiction, practice self-governance, or operate a casino on the land. For decades, tribes were able buy back what had once been tribal lands and place them in trust. This changed with the growth of Indian gaming/casinos in the 1990s, as outside gaming and casino interests who wanted to control the industry, began challenging the placement of lands into trust. H.R.5244, the bipartisan Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe Reservation Reaffirmation Act would maintain the tribe’s sovereignty by having these lands taken into trust by the DOI. H.R.5244 is currently with the House Natural Resources Committee. (Write-up 11/24/18)

**INFORM** key members of the House Natural Resources Committee that we want to see swift, positive action on this legislation

• **Representative Rob Bishop** (R-UT), Chair, House Natural Resources Committee, 1324 Longworth House office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-2761

• **Representative Louie Gohmert** (R-TX), Vice-Chair, House Natural Resources Committee, 1324 Longworth House office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-2761

• **Representative Raúl Grijalva** (D-AZ), Ranking Member, House Natural Resources Committee, 1324 Longworth House office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-2761

**TELL** our Representative that we want him to affirm Wampanoag sovereignty by supporting H.R.5244 and **ASK** him to become a cosponsor

• **Representative Jimmy Panetta** (D-CA), 228 Cannon House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-2861

S.1942, known as “Savanna’s Act” would improve federal record-keeping and reporting on violence against Native Americans, require consultation about these crimes with Indian tribes, and provide tribes and law enforcement agencies with training to improve justice protocols. This legislation has made it through the Senate’s Indian Affairs Committee and may now be placed on the calendar of the full Senate. (Write-up 11/24/18)

**URGE** our Senators to support S.1942

• **Senator Dianne Feinstein** (D-CA), 331 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-3841

• **Senator Kamala Harris** (D-CA), 112 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-3553

H.R.7118, the Excessive Use of Force Prevention Act, prohibits the use of chokeholds on arrestees and prisoners. It’s a simple piece of legislation and sadly necessary, as the death/killing of Eric Garner at the hands of law enforcement has demonstrated. H.R.7118 is currently with the House Judiciary Committee. (Write-up 11/19/18)

**URGE** key members of the House Judiciary Committee to take action on H.R.7118 note that the current Ranking Member will probably become Chair when the next Congress is sworn in)

• **Representative Bob Goodlatte** (R-VA), Chair, House Judiciary Committee, 2138 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-3951

• **Representative Jerry Nadler** (D-NY), Ranking Member, House Judiciary Committee, 2138 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-3951

Because of the obvious power imbalance between prisoners/detainees and prison/detention facility staff, all fifty states, the District of Columbia, and the federal government hold correctional facility staff who have sexual contact with inmates criminally liable—regardless of whether the staffer claims that the sexual activity was consensual. An asylum-seeker and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention center resident, who was nineteen at the time and being held with her three-year-old daughter, was sexually assaulted by a center staffer. The staffer has plead guilty to criminal institutional sexual assault, so that aspect of the case is not in question. The detainee filed suit against the center, claiming that staffers witnessed and joked about the assailant’s efforts to coerce sex through threats, including threats of deportation. Now the detention center is using a “consent” claim to try to avoid responsibility for the sexual assault of a detainee. The incidence of sexual assault in immigration detention facilities is significant. Allegations of sexual assault were filed with ICE 1,448 times between 2012 and March, 2018. In 2013, the Government Accountability Office determined that 40% of abuse allegations filed with immigration prisons and detention centers were not reported to ICE headquarters. In 2014 the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) signed on to the 2003 Prison Rape Elimination Act, but DHS claims that the act’s provisions only apply to centers with which DHS is signing new or modified agreements, not to centers with which DHS has had long-term contracts. (Write-up 11/19/18)

**DEMAND** that this pattern of sexual assault in ICE detention centers and DHS’s intransigence in claiming to be above the law be brought to an end

• **Kirstjen M. Nielsen**, Secretary of Homeland Security, 245 Murray Lane SW, Washington DC 20528-0075, (202) 282-8494

• **Ronald Vitiello**, Acting Director, Immigration and Customs Enforcement**,** 500 12th St. SW, Washington D.C. 20536, (866) DHS-2-ICE

**INFORM** our Congresspeople that we want to see a thorough investigation of and response to these credible allegations of sexual assault

• **Senator Dianne Feinstein** (D-CA), 331 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-3841

• **Senator Kamala Harris** (D-CA), 112 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-3553

• **Representative Jimmy Panetta** (D-CA), 228 Cannon House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-2861

**GUNS**

With a Democratic majority in the next House, we have a chance to push for reasonable regulation of firearms, including universal background checks. Ninety-seven percent of Americans and seventy-seven percent of gun owners favor universal backgrounds, which should make legislation on this topic relatively non-controversial, but the influence of pro-gun groups has hindered the passage of such legislation. S.1923, the Background Check Completion Act, and S.2009, the Background Check Expansion Act, are both with the Senate Judiciary Committee. H.R.3464, also titled the Background Check Completion Act, is with the House Judiciary Committee. Back in February, an attempt to move H.R.3464 out of committee via “discharge” (a process that requires the signature of 218 House members) and onto the House floor, but failed, receiving only 178 signatures. (Write-up 11/19/18)

**REMIND** our Congresspeople and the incoming House Judiciary Committee Chair (currently the committee’s Ranking Member) that the vast majority of the American public want universal background checks and are waiting for action

• **Representative Jerry Nadler** (D-NY), Ranking Member, House Judiciary Committee, 2138 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-3951

• **Senator Dianne Feinstein** (D-CA), 331 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-3841

• **Senator Kamala Harris** (D-CA), 112 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-3553

• **Representative Jimmy Panetta** (D-CA), 228 Cannon House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-2861

H.R.7115, the 3D Firearms Prohibition Act, would prohibit the sale, distribution, and importation of 3D printed firearms. It would also require homemade firearms to have serial numbers. This legislation is currently with two House committees Judiciary and Energy and Commerce. (Write-up 11/19/18)

**URGE** committee approval of H.R.7115, so that it can be moved to consideration by the full House

• **Representative Bob Goodlatte** (R-VA), Chair, House Judiciary Committee, 2138 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-3951

• **Representative Jerry Nadler** (D-NY), Ranking Member, House Judiciary Committee, 2138 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-3951

• **Representative Greg Walden** (R-OR), Chair, House Energy and Commerce Committee, 2125

Rayburn House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-2927

• **Representative Joe Barton** (R-TX), Vice-Chair, House Energy and Commerce Committee,

2125 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-2927

• **Representative Frank Pallone** (D-NJ), Ranking Member, House Energy and Commerce

Committee, 2125 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-2927

**HEALTH and HEALTHCARE**

H.R.5977, MOMMA’s Act (Mothers and Offspring Mortality and Morbidity Awareness ACT), would improve data-gathering on maternal mortality in the U.S. and support the development of practices to prevent this mortality. It is currently with the House Energy and Commerce Committee. The U.S. has the highest maternal mortality rate of any developed country and is the only developed country in the world with its maternal mortality rate *on the rise*. The rate for white, non-Hispanic maternal deaths is 18.1 per 100,000. For Black mothers the rate is more than twice that: 47.2 per 100,000. (Write-up 11/24/18)

**POINT OUT** these dismal numbers to our Representative and **URGE** him to co-sponsor H.R.5977

• **Representative Jimmy Panetta** (D-CA), 228 Cannon House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-2861

**TELL** key members of the House Energy and Commerce Committee that we want action on H.R.5977 now and that we find the U.S.’s maternal mortality rate completely unacceptable

• **Representative Greg Walden** (R-OR), Chair, House Energy and Commerce Committee, 2125, Rayburn House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-2927

• **Representative Joe Barton** (R-TX), Vice-Chair, House Energy and Commerce Committee, 2125 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-2927

• **Representative Frank Pallone** (D-NJ), Ranking Member, House Energy and Commerce Committee, 2125 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-2927

One of the Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) responsibilities is testing food for pesticide residue. One such pesticide is glyphosate, which the International Agency for Research on Cancer, part of the World Health Organization, has listed glyphosate as a probable human carcinogen. In addition to threatening humans, glyphosate can be deadly for animal species. Glyphosate kills milkweed, the only food young monarch butterflies eat, increasing this species’ risk of extinction. Glyphosate is also particularly deadly for amphibians. The FDA has started testing some foods for glyphosate, including corn, soy, milk, eggs. Sixty-three percent of corn samples and sixty-seven percent of soy bean samples contained glyphosate. Wheat and oats, two crops likely to contain high levels of glyphosate are not being tested. (Write-up 11/19/18)

**CALL** on the FDA to increase its monitoring of glyphosate and to add wheat and oats to the list of crops tested for glyphosate

• **Scott Gottlieb, MD**, Commissioner of Food and Drugs, Food and Drug Administration, 10903 New Hampshire Ave., Silver Spring, MD 20993, (888) INFO-FDA

• **Rear Admiral Denise Hinton**, Chief Scientist, Food and Drug Administration, 10903 New Hampshire Ave., Silver Spring, MD 20993, (888) INFO-FDA

• **Melinda K. Plaisier, MSW**, Associate Commissioner for Regulatory Affairs, Food and Drug Administration, 10903 New Hampshire Ave., Silver Spring, MD 20993, (888) INFO-FDA

A report from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine urges the Veterans’ Administration to study the effects of Agent Orange (a defoliant used during the Vietnam War) on the children of that war’s veterans. There are very few studies of the effects of paternal exposure to agent orange—and none of these focus on veterans and their children. (Write-up 11/19/18)

**JOIN** the call for more research on the effects of parental exposure to agent orange

• **Robert Wilkie**, Secretary of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Ave. NW, Washington DC 20420, (800) 827-1000

• **Richard A. Stone**, MD, Executive in Charge, Veterans Health Administration, 810 Vermont Ave. NW, Washington DC 20420, (800) 827-1000

**HUMAN and CIVIL RIGHTS**

**Newsweek** reports that the current version North American Free Trade Agreement, which is still being finalized, includes a provision protecting workers from “sex discrimination,” which is defined to include discrimination on the basis of gender identity—in other words, protections for LGBT workers. A group of thirty-eight Congresspeople, all Republicans, has written to Donald Trump demanding that this provision of the agreement be scrapped because “A trade agreement is no place for the adoption of social policy. It is especially inappropriate and insulting to our sovereignty to needlessly submit to social policies which the United States Congress has so far explicitly refused to accept.” (Write-up 11/24/18)

**INFORM** our Democratic Congresspeople that we would like to see them take a stance for protections of LGBT people and that we want these protections affirmed in any final version of a new NAFTA

• **Senator Dianne Feinstein** (D-CA), 331 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-3841

• **Senator Kamala Harris** (D-CA), 112 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-3553

• **Representative Jimmy Panetta** (D-CA), 228 Cannon House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-2861

From *Rogan’s List*: “The students of the Judge Rotenberg Center continue to be subjected to electric shocks through the use of Graduated Electronic Devices (GED. We've joined ADAPT before in asking the Food and Drug Administration Commissioner to ban these devices, whose open comment period ended more than two years ago, then asking the Health and Human Services Secretary to step in, and then calling on the Governor of Massachusetts to appeal the court ruling which allowed these shocks to continue…. [Now] Disability Rights International is contacting Dr. Paulo Abrao, Executive Secretary of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, and asking that the Commission take measures to stop the Judge Rotenberg Center from utilizing electric shocks, restraints, and seclusion.” (Write-up 11/24/18)

**JOIN** the calls for action by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in the effort to end this abuse

• **Dr. Paulo Abrao**, Executive Secretary, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights Organization of American States, 1889 F St NW Washington, D.C. 20006

United Nations human rights investigators examining possible genocide by Myanmar against its own Muslim minority Rohingya population, have pointed to Facebook as having played a “determining” role in the anti-Rohingya actions which have included murder and systematic rape and have forced more than 650,000 Rohingya to flee the country, seeking refuge in Bangladesh. The head of the investigative team says that social media have “substantively contributed to the level of acrimony and dissention [in Myanmar].” While there is no single cause for these atrocities, Facebook, which is the primary news source for many in Myanmar, could clearly have acted more strongly and quickly to prevent the spread of anti-Rohingya hate speech. Alan Davis, an Institute for War and Peace Reporting analyst, explains that Facebook posts in Myanmar became “more organized and odious, and more militarized.” His team found fabricated stories claiming that mosques were stockpiling weapons, racial and religious slurs, and demands for “Muslim-free areas.” (Write-up 11/19/18)

**DEMAND** that Facebook acknowledge the damage its failure to block hate speech and its falsified “news” stories have done and **POINT OUT** that the material on its platform can be, not only a matter of life and death, but a matter of genocide

• **Mark Zuckerberg**, Chairman and CEO, Facebook Headquarters, 1 Hacker Way, Menlo Park, CA 94025, (650) 543-4800

• **Sheryl Sandberg**, Chief Operating Officer, Facebook, 1601 Willow Rd, Menlo Park, CA 94025, (650) 308-7300

**TELL** our Congresspeople that additional investigation of Facebook is needed for the sake not only of our own political discourse, but for the sake of people around the world, particularly vilified minority populations

• **Senator Dianne Feinstein** (D-CA), 331 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-3841

• **Senator Kamala Harris** (D-CA), 112 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-3553

• **Representative Jimmy Panetta** (D-CA), 228 Cannon House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-2861

The Republican administration, via the State Department, has been squashing both language and action on women’s reproductive health issues. American diplomats have been told to scale back support for sexual and reproductive health programs. The State Department is also reportedly considering a ban on diplomates use of terms like “sexual and reproductive health” and “comprehensive sexuality education.” A group of Democratic House members led by Eliot Engel (currently Ranking Member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and likely Chair of the committee when the new Congress is sworn in) have warned Secretary of State Mike Pompeo that such a ban on terms would be seen as regressive, signaling “to the world that the U.S. deems ideology more important than facts in determining America’s foreign policy priorities.” Engel has also warned Pompeo that, should Engel become Foreign Affairs Chair, he will prioritize oversight of the State Department. (Write-up 11/19/18)

**CASTIGATE** the Secretary of State for his attempts to distort and hinder global conversations on woman’s and reproductive health

• **Mike Pompeo**, U.S. Secretary of State, 2201 C St. NW, Washington DC 20520-2204, (202) 647-6575

**THANK** Engel for making it clear that the incoming House will be closely monitoring actions like these that discount science in favor of ideology

• **Representative Eliot Engel** (D-NY), Ranking Member, House Foreign Affairs Committee, 2170 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-5021

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), H.R.6545, has passed its original expiration date and has been temporarily continued, but it’s time for a full reauthorization of this important legislation. VAWA provides support for those subjected to rape and domestic violence and has a history of bipartisan support. Currently VAWA has been “farmed out” to a number of House committees/subcommittees. Given the approaching change in House leadership, it may be most productive to begin urging action by incoming committee Chairs, should this Congress fail to reauthorize VAWA. (Write-up 11/19/18)

**TELL** these likely incoming House committee Chairs (current Ranking Members) that if VAWA isn’t reauthorized by time they take over committee leadership, we want to see them prioritize reauthorization

• **Representative Jerry Nadler** (D-NY), Ranking Member, House Judiciary Committee, 2138 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-3951

• **Representative Sheila Jackson Lee** (D-TX), Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security, and Investigations, House Judiciary Committee, 2138 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-3951

• **Representative Frank Pallone** (D-NJ), Ranking Member, House Energy and Commerce

Committee, 2125 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-2927

• **Representative Richard Neal** (D-MA), Ranking Member, House Ways and Means

Committee, 1102 Longworth House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-3625

• **Representative Raúl Grijalva** (D-AZ), Ranking Member, House Natural Resources Committee, 1324 Longworth House office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-2761

• **Representative Robert C. “Bobby” Scott** (D-VA), Ranking Member, House Education and the Workforce Committee, 2176 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-4527

• **Representative Maxine Waters** (D-CA), Ranking Member, House Finance Committee, 2129 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-7502

Republican administration has announced a plan to restrict asylum and deprive asylum-seekers of their rights as outlined in the 1980 Refugee Act. On November 8, it announced a blanket ban on asylum seekers fleeing gang violence and persecution in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. Levels of violence in Central America are similar to those in the world’s worst war zones. A judge has blocked the plan for now, but we still need to speak up against it. (Write-up 11/19/18)

**DECRY** the U.S. failure to honor domestic and international law and the decision to deprive asylum seekers of their due-process rights

• **Mike Pompeo**, U.S. Secretary of State, 2201 C St. NW, Washington DC 20520-2204, (202) 647-6575

• **Kirstjen M. Nielsen**, Secretary of Homeland Security, 245 Murray Lane SW, Washington DC 20528-0075, (202) 282-8494

• **Senator Dianne Feinstein** (D-CA), 331 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-3841

• **Senator Kamala Harris** (D-CA), 112 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-3553

• **Representative Jimmy Panetta** (D-CA), 228 Cannon House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-2861

**INTERNATIONAL**

The aid organization Save the Children has offered what it calls a *conservative* estimate of the number of children that have starved during the war in Yemen: 85,000 children under the age of five. Saudi Arabia has led the air war in this conflict, and many of the deaths have resulted from sanctions and blockades by the Saudis. An August United Nations report says that the conditions being suffered by Yemeni civilians amount to possible war crimes. The U.S. has finally stopped fueling Saudi planes engaged in the air war, but with a U.N.-estimated 14 million Yemenis on the brink of starvation this is not enough. (Write-up 11/24/18)

**DEMAND** that our Congresspeople push for an end to U.S. military support of the Saudis perhaps **POINTING OUT** that the murder of Jamal Kashoggi also demands a response of this sort

• **Senator Dianne Feinstein** (D-CA), 331 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-3841

• **Senator Kamala Harris** (D-CA), 112 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-3553

• **Representative Jimmy Panetta** (D-CA), 228 Cannon House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-2861

**URGE** the likely incoming Speaker of the House to step up her response to Yemeni deaths now by co-sponsoring the House Yemen War Powers Resolution and to make enduing this conflict a priority during the next Congressional term.

• **Representative Nancy Pelosi** (D-CA), 233 Cannon House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-4965

Trump has made it absolutely clear that he intends to take no actions against Saudi Arabia for the murder of journalist and U.S. resident Jamal Kashoggi, despite a determination by the Central Intelligence Agency that Kashoggi’s murder was ordered from the highest levels of Saudi government. As a result, it is up to Congress to defend free press and to sanction Saudi Arabia. (Write-up 11/21/18)

CALL for Congressional sanctions against Saudi Arabia for this brutal murder from key members of the House and Senate Foreign Relations/Affairs Committees

• **Senator Bob Corker** (R-TN), Chair, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 425 Dirksen Senate Office Building Washington DC 20510

• **Senator Benjamin Cardin** (D-MD), Ranking Member, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 509 Hart Senate Office Building Washington DC 20510

• **Representative Ed Royce** (R-CA), Chair, House Foreign Affairs Committee, 2170 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-5021

• **Representative Francis Rooney** (R-FL), Vice-Chair, House Foreign Affairs Committee, 2170 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-5021

• **Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen** (R-FL), Chair Emeritus, House Foreign Affairs Committee, 2170 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-5021

• **Representative Eliot Engel** (D-NY), Ranking Member, House Foreign Affairs Committee, 2170 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-5021

URGE our Congresspeople to advocate for strong sanctions against Saudi Arabia

• **Senator Dianne Feinstein** (D-CA), 331 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-3841

• **Senator Kamala Harris** (D-CA), 112 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-3553

• **Representative Jimmy Panetta** (D-CA), 228 Cannon House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-2861

**JUDICIAL**

There are (at least!) three current judicial nominees who would be disasters on the bench due to their histories of bias. The judgeships for which they’re nominated are lifetime appointments, so they will be able to continue doing damage long after the current Administration leaves the White House. Chad Readler has a history of advocating for bigoted policies, from reduced early voting hours to supporting the Department of Justice’s family separation policy Jonathan Kobes is a strong opponent of reproductive rights and an active member of the National Rifle Association who opposed common-sense gun legislation. Thomas Farr is a known racist, segregationist, and voter suppressor—and the district he’s nominated to serve in is 30% African American, but has never had an African-American Judge. (Write-up 11/21/18)

**INSIST** to key members of the Senate Judiciary Committee that these men are unfit for confirmation

• **Senator Chick Grassley** (R-IA), Chair, Senate Judiciary Committee, 224 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-5225

• **Senator Dianne Feinstein** (D-CA), Ranking Member, Senate Judiciary Committee, 224 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-5225

• **Senator Kamala Harris** (D- A), Member, Senate Judiciary Committee, 224 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-5225