2018.11.30 Issues/Addresses

**EDUCATION**

We have things to look forward to in Congress’ next session, and we can start pushing now for the issues that matter to us. When Committee Chair positions transfer to the Democrats, investigations of Education Secretary Betsy DeVos will definitely be on the table. We can encourage committee leadership to investigate the effect of DeVos’s work on the civil rights of groups of students, including people of color, first-generation college students, the disabled, LGBTQ+ students, Veterans, and student borrowers. (Write-up 11/30/18)

**URGE** these (likely) incoming committee and subcommittee chairs to put fair and inclusive access to education at all levels on their committee agenda

• **Representative Bobby Scott** (D-VA), Incoming House Education Committee Chair, 1201 Longworth House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-8351

• **Representative Maxine Waters** (D-CA), Incoming House Finance Committee Chair, 2221 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-2201

• **Representative Nita Lowey** (D-NY), Incoming House Appropriations Committee Chair, 2365 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-6506

• **Representative Rosa DeLauro** (D-CT), Incoming Appropriations Subcommittee Chair, 2413 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-3661

• **Representative Mark Takano** (D-CA), Incoming House Veterans’ Affairs Committee Chair, 1507 Longworth House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-2305

• **Representative Elijah Cummings** (D-MD), Incoming House Oversight Committee Chair, 2163 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-4741

**ELECTIONS**

Senator Tom Udall has introduced S.3543, the Native American Voting Rights Act, which is now before the Senate Judiciary Committee. This legislation is long overdue, particularly given efforts in some states during midterm elections to deliberately disenfranchise Native American voters. Dianne Feinstein and Kamala Harris are both cosponsors. (Write-up 11/30/18)

**EXPRESS** your concerns about this important issue to key Senate Judiciary Committee members [Remember that Feinstein is incoming committee chair] and THANKS Feinstein and Harris for their cosponsorship

• **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

**ENVIRONMENT**

An interesting piece of legislation that’s not gotten much attention would establish Green Bonds and a Green Bank (S.1406 in the Senate; H.R.2995 in the House) to support the development of clean energy and energy-efficient projects. S.1406 is with the Senate Finance Committee. H.R.2995 is with both the House Ways and Means Committee and the House Energy and Commerce Committee. Neither our Senators nor our Representative are cosponsors. While there’s not a lot of time left in this session of Congress, this legislation is worth pushing for. (Write-up 11/30/2018)

**PRESS** for action by key committees before this Congressional session ends

• **Senator Ron Wyden** (D-OR), Ranking Member, Senate Finance Committee, 219 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-4515

• **Senator Orrin G. Hatch** (R-UT), Chair, Senate Finance Committee, 219 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-4515

• **Representative Kevin Brady**, Chair, House Ways and Means Committee,1102 Longworth House Office Building, Washington DC 205615, (202) 225-3625

• **Representative Richard Nea**l (D-MA), Ranking Member, House Ways and Means Committee,1102 Longworth House Office Building, Washington DC 205615, (202) 225-3625

• **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

**URGE** our Congresspeople to become cosponsors

• **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 latest E. coli outbreak associated with romaine lettuce is a reminder of weaknesses in our food safety system. One gap in this system is the lack of a requirement that growers test irrigation water for pathogens. The Obama Administration had established regulations that would have required testing of irrigation water beginning this year. But Trump’s Food and Drug Administration (FDA), under pressure from growers, has postponed mandatory water-testing for four years. (Write-up 11/30/2018)

**DEMAND** that the FDA do its job and protect consumers and **POINT OUT** that we have ample evidence now of the health- and life-threatening risks this lack of testing poses

• **Scott Gottlieb**, Commissioner, U.S. Food and Drug Administration, 10903 New Hampshire Ave., Silver Spring, MD 20993, (888) 463-6332

Here’s another reason to resist oil and gas drilling on public lands—it is ultimately responsible for 25% of all greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S. This is the conclusion of another scientific report released by the Republican administration on Black Friday (perhaps in hopes of minimizing the report’s impact). Cutting oil and gas drilling on public lands might simply lead to acquiring these resources elsewhere, with no net reduction in greenhouse gasses. On the other hand, perhaps it could increase pressure to look for cleaner power sources. (Write-up 11/30/2018)

**INSIST** that the Interior Department protect public lands and **EXPLAIN** that for the long-term health of our public lands and our planet you’d like to see the Interior Department explore ways to support clean energy—if the Interior Department is to be in the energy business at all

• **Ryan Zinke**, Secretary of the Interior, 1849 C St. NW, Washington DC 20240, (202) 208-3100

• **Brian Steed**, Deputy Director, Policy and Programs, Bureau of Land Management, 1849 C St. NW, Room 5665, Washington DC 20240, (202) 208-3801

**ETHICS**

*This one is long. Read it anyway. It’s big.* Alexander Acosta, currently the Republican administration’s Secretary of Labor, has a long history of political involvement. He held positions in George W. Bush’s White House, then was appointed U.S. Attorney for Miami. During his Miami stint, Acosta worked out a very “interesting” (which is to say deeply inappropriate, unjust, and possibly illegal) plea deal with Palm Beach multimillionaire Jeffrey Epstein who was facing a multitude of charges focused on his recruitment of and sexual activity with underage girls. Epstein had been arrested in 2007 after investigations by the Palm Beach Police. FBI and court records show that Epstein was also being investigated for trafficking underage girls for sex parties at his various residences in the U.S. and the Caribbean. In sum, 54-year-old Epstein was facing enough charges to land him in federal prison for the rest of his life. However, Epstein’s attorney negotiated a very lenient non-prosecution agreement with—you guessed it—U.S. Attorney Acosta. Epstein pled guilty to two prostitution charges in exchange for which all other charges were dropped and other investigations halted. Epstein would serve only thirteen months in county jail. The non-prosecution agreement included any “potential coconspirators,” (which is to say any of the wealthy, powerful men who had enjoyed the “services” offered at Epstein’s parties). The deal also included a clause in violation of federal law stipulating that the deal would be kept from Epstein’s victims, and the agreement was sealed until after its approval, preventing any of Epstein’s victims from contesting it. No one knows the real number of Epstein’s victims, though the plea agreement did require him to pay restitution to thirty-six victims identified by the FBI. There is some speculation that Epstein’s plea deal, which included “special consideration” for other testimony, was related to the prosecution of two Bears Sterns executives, who were accused of corporate fraud after the global investment brokerage failed in 2008, during the subprime mortgage crisis. In other words the current Labor Secretary, whose responsibilities require overseeing all labor law—including human trafficking charges—appears to have very deliberately allowed a repeat sex offender and potential human trafficker to walk away with a slap on the wrist. (Write-up 11/30/2018)

**DEMAND** an investigation of Acosta’s role in the Epstein agreement, which has been undergoing court challenges for more than a decade at this point, and **QUESTION** the appropriateness of Acosta having the responsibility to defend victims of human trafficking

• **Senator Lamar Alexander** (R-TN), Chair, Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, 428 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 225-4944

• **Senator Patty Murray** (D-WA), Ranking Member, Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, 428 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 225-4944

• **Representative Virginia Foxx** (R-NC), Chair, House Education and the Workforce Committee, 2176 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-4527

• **Representative Joe Wilson** (R-SC), Vice-Chair, House Education and the Workforce Committee, 2176 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-4527

• **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 [remember Scott is slated to become Chair of this committee in January]

Criticism of the nomination of Matthew Whitaker to replace former Attorney General Jeff Sessions has focused on Whitaker’s statements insisting that judges be Christians and the way in which Trump has tried to work around normal nomination and confirmation practices in order to place Whitaker in the position without Senate approval. There is, however, another reason to be very concerned about Whitaker’s appointment that is just coming to light now. In 2014 Whitaker joined the board of World Patent Marketing, a company that claimed to offer inventors assistance with winning patents for their inventions. Whitaker was soon fielding complaints about the company—including a complaint from one of Whitaker’s own private-practice clients—from individuals who said they had been defrauded by World Patent Marketing and who turned to Whitaker for help. Nonetheless for three years Whitaker championed World Patent Marketing, despite repeated warnings about the company’s behavior. Eventually the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) filed a complaint against World Patent Marketing and in May a federal court ordered the company (which did not admit to wrongdoing) to pay a $25 million settlement and to close shop. During this investigation, Whitaker did not provide subpoenaed records and still has not done so, despite promises to cooperate. (Write-up 11/30/2018)

**INSIST** that the Senate Judiciary Committee investigate Whitaker’s activities while on the board of World Patent Marketing before the committee begins any consideration of his nomination for Attorney General

• **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

**FAMILY SEPARATION, DENATURALIZATION, and IMMIGRATION**

There are a lot of questions to be asked about the current Republican administration’s immigration policies: family separation, the “not-a-ban” Muslim ban, and the gassing of asylum seekers. One person who can see that these questions are asked is Bennie Thompson, incoming Chair of the House Homeland Security Committee. (Write-up 11/30/2018)

**ASK** Thompson to prioritize scrutiny of both immigration policies and the administration’s justifications for these policies

• **Representative Bennie Thompson** (D-MS), Incoming House Homeland Security Committee Chair, 2466 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-5876

The Texas immigration detention center (read “tent camp”) for children gets uglier by the day. Since mid-October more than 1300 teens have arrived at the center. The center is understaffed: federal policy mandates one mental health worker for every twelve children; the canter has a 1:50 ratio. The center has waived the normal requirement that employees undergo an FBI background check to ensure they do not have histories of violence or sexual assault. Employees and visitors are restricted from disclosing any observations they make of conditions within the facility. Finally, the cost to taxpayers for this inhumane, federal-regulation-defying center is estimated at $430 million. (Write-up 11/30/2018)

**OBJECT** to this use of our tax dollars and **INSIST** to our Congresspeople that these children be given fair, humane, transparent treatment that complies with federal law

• **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**

Senator Jeff Flake, an on-again, off-again advocate for a certain level of integrity in politics is on again—and deserves our thanks. Flake sits on the Senate Judiciary Committee, which has been forwarding Trump’s judicial nominees at an alarming rate and along party-line votes. The Senator has now declared that he will hold up all confirmations until the Senate votes on protections for Special Counsel Robert Mueller. (Write-up 11/30/2018)

**THANKS** for putting country above party to

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

The teargas used on asylum seekers at the U.S.’s southern border was manufactured by the same company that provided the teargas used at Standing Rock, Safariland Corp. Safariland’s Chief Executive Officer is Warren B. Kanders, who sits on the board of the Whitney Museum and on the Advisory Council for the Institute for Environment and Society at Brown University. (Write-up 11/30/2018)

**EXPLAIN** to the Whitney and to Brown University how reprehensible you find Kanders’ presence among their organizational leadership

• **Whitney Museum of American Art**, 99 Gansevoort 99 Gansevoort Street, New York, NY 10014, (212) 570-3600

• **Institute at Brown for Environment & Society**, IBES, Brown University, Box 1951, 85 Waterman Street, Providence, RI 02912, (401) 863-3449

**HEALTH and HEALTHCARE**

When was the last time the number of U.S. children without health insurance was on the rise? More than a decade ago, until—during Trump’s first year in office the number of uninsured children grew by 276,000 according to findings from Georgetown University. The Georgetown researchers cite Republican efforts to keep states from expanding Medicaid and administration threats to go after immigrants (documented or undocumented) who make use of such services. (Write-up 11/30/2018)

**DECRY** this embarrassing downturn in our progress towards providing all children with healthcare and **ASK** the incoming chairs of the four House committees that deal with healthcare to prioritize health insurance for all children

• **Representative Richard Neal** (D-MA) Ranking Member and Incoming Chair, House Ways and Means Committee, 341 Cannon House Office Building Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-5601

• **Representative Frank Pallone, Jr.**, (D-NJ), Ranking Member and Incoming Chair, House Energy and Commerce Committee, 237 Cannon House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-4671

• **Representative Nita Lowey** (D-NY), Ranking Member and Incoming Chair, House Appropriations Committee, 2365 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-6506

• **Representative John Yarmuth** (D-KY), Ranking Member and Incoming Chair, House Budget Committee, 131 Cannon House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-5401

From *Rogan’s List*: “In a move that has set off a lobbying frenzy and shocked some experts on healthcare, Trump has just invited the healthcare industry to assist in rewriting the federal kickback and self-referral rules now governing doctors; the existing rules are aimed at preventing improper influence over choices of doctors, hospitals and prescription drugs for Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries, 100 million people who account for more than a third of all health spending.” (Write-up 11/30/2018)

**TELL** the White House and the Department of Health and Human Services that the healthcare industry has already proven itself so predatory and corrupt that it must be barred from any participation in such rule-writing

• **Donald Trump**, The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington DC 20500, (202) 456-1111

• **Alex Azar**, Secretary of Health and Human Services, 200 Independence Ave. SW, Washington DC 20201, (877) 696-6775

**HUMAN and CIVIL RIGHTS**

Despite all evidence to the contrary—including the results of a CIA investigation that identified the Crown Prince as the key figure in the assassination—Trump has continued to deny that the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia was involved in ordering the murder of Jamal Khashoggi. Khashoggi was a U.S. resident and deserves justice. He would deserve justice regardless of whether he was a U.S. resident, but our country has a particular responsibility to him under these circumstances. (Write-up 11/30/2018)

**EXPRESS** your disgust for Trump’s continued defense of the Saudis and **INSIST** that Congress take steps to sanction the Saudis, since Trump won’t.

• **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.Con.Res.138 calls for the end of participation by U.S. forces not Congressionally authorized in the military conflict in Yemen. This resolution has 93 cosponsors, among them our own Jimmy Panetta. (Write-up 11/30/2018)

**THANK** Representative Panetta for supporting this important resolution

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

The human rights situation in Nicaragua continues to worsen. H.R.1918 which has already passed the Senate and the House, directs the President to instruct the U.S. Executive Director at each international financial institution to use U.S. influence to oppose any loan for the government of Nicaragua's benefit, other than for basic human needs or to promote democracy, unless the Department of State certifies that Nicaragua is taking effective steps to: hold free elections overseen by credible domestic and international electoral observers; promote democracy and an independent judicial system and electoral council; strengthen the rule of law; respect the right to freedom of association and expression; combat corruption, including investigating and prosecuting corrupt government officials; and protect the right of political opposition parties, journalists, trade unionists, human rights defenders, and other civil society activists to operate without interference. (Write-up 11/30/2018)

**URGE** Trump to follow through on this legislation

• **Donald Trump**, The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington DC 20500, (202) 456-1111