

POLITICAL DISPATCH

FROM THE PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE



The articles below are commentary on current events, intended to encourage further reflection and debate. Except for official Board statements, the viewpoints expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official positions of the Woman's National Democratic Club.

The New Normal on Civil Rights—What's Next?

The recent election has substantially increased fear in a number of disenfranchised groups: immigrants, African Americans, LGBT people, Muslims, and women. We now must ask what will happen to the entire human and civil rights that Americans have fought for over the past several decades.

Each group fears a return to the de-legitimized days of yore-- before the Civil Rights Act, the Voting Rights Act, marriage equality, and immigration reform. "Make America great again" does not connote a return to ideal times for many people. Instead, people are anxious and afraid about their individual rights as citizens. They fear that the policies of this new administration will recalibrate the political landscape, destabilize their lives, and decrease basic rights and freedoms that have taken decades to build.

The Southern Poverty Law Center's Hatewatch group reports over 800 incidents of intimidation and harassment since the November 8 election. Anti-immigrant, anti- Black, and anti-LGBTQ incidents top the list with almost 40 percent of these incidents reported as occurring in educational settings.

LGBTQ communities are feeling especially vulnerable. People fear for their physical safety and question how the incoming administration will deal with issues such as gay marriage, gender affirmation, employment discrimination, and health concerns that may adversely impact the LGBTQ community. Specifically, people are looking at Vice-President Elect Mike Pence and his history of positions as Governor of Indiana that have negatively impacted the LGBTQ community.

Pence voted against the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) in 2007 which would prohibit discrimination in hiring and employment based on gender identity or sexual orientation. In 2015, he signed into law Indiana's Religious Freedom Restoration Act that permits business owners to refuse service to anyone on the basis of religious beliefs.

Anti-marriage equality sentiments are evident in Pence's 2003 signing of the Federal Marriage Amendment in 2003, which defines marriage as between one man and one woman. He has also endorsed diverting resources from HIV/AIDS programs and supporting organizations that promote so-called conversion therapy. This practice, which has been rejected by the American Psychological Association and other mental health organizations, claims it can "cure" clients of being gay. Currently, Washington, DC, along with five other states, prohibits licensed mental health practitioners from subjecting LGBTQ minors to this harmful practice.

So—what can we do?

- Fight complacency: Step up to the plate and Do Something.
- Read "[Ten Ways To Fight Hate: A Community Response Guide](#)" by the Southern Poverty Law Center.
- Choose a group or organization that supports civil rights and volunteer and/or donate money.

On the Environment—A Big Thank You to President Obama!

President Obama has shown exceptional leadership in environmental protection in the U.S. and in the global effort to slow climate change. First, he and Secretary of State Kerry played a key role in the 2015 Paris Accords, the greatest achievement to date in addressing climate change. Signed by 196 countries (including China!), the Accords approved ambitious goals for reducing manmade emissions of greenhouse gases. Yet the incoming Trump Administration will likely push to remove the U.S. from this crucial international pact.

Another major step to reduce the American carbon footprint is the Clean Power Plan (CPP), which creates partnerships between the EPA, states, tribes, and U.S. territories to set goals on limiting U.S. power plant emissions and helps these jurisdictions meet those goals. The CPP, if fully carried out, would enable states to cut up to 870 million tons of carbon per year (with an impact equal to taking more than 166 million cars off the roads each year). Unfortunately, the Trump nominee for EPA administrator is one of those state officials suing to stop the CPP.

On the Keystone XL Pipeline, the President concluded that approving a pipeline to carry of dirty tar sands oil across the American heartland would have been a huge mistake. His declaration of opposition sent a clear message to the world of our intent to take dramatic action against polluting industries.

Further, the Administration is not issuing new offshore drilling leases in the Arctic; new EPA regulations are limiting methane emissions from oil and gas extraction operations; new increased fuel economy standards for heavy-duty vehicles will account for more than 20 percent of transportation-related fuel consumption and emissions; and the President provided leadership for enacting bipartisan legislation giving the EPA new authorities for chemical safety standards.

Finally, the President has become our country's "monuments man" ([New York Times, August 26, 2016](#)), emerging as a 21st-century Theodore Roosevelt for his protection of public lands and marine reserves. President Obama established 24 new monuments and expanded others; most importantly, he acted to make a marine reserve in the Pacific, established by President George W. Bush, the world's biggest ocean preserve. More recently, he announced the creation of the first national marine monument in the Atlantic Ocean, protecting fragile ecosystems off the coast of New England, including pristine undersea canyons and seamounts. Most importantly, under the Antiquities Act of 1906, the President is empowered to create National Monuments on federal lands that cannot be undone by unfriendly legislators or administrations.

How can we support this great legacy?

- Insist on continued U.S. support of the Paris Climate Accords and its goals of limiting global rise in temperature.
- Strongly support states that are implementing the CPP and press for an EPA that will continue it.
- Oppose all efforts to reverse the Obama Administration's great progress on the environment.

Thank you, President Obama. We salute you for your continued tough and courageous work on the environment!

Jean Stewart chairs the PPC's Earth and Environment Task Force.

Cities in the Age of Trump and Brexit: A Brookings Institution Analysis

On December 9, the Brookings Institution convened a discussion on the impact of the recent Brexit election and the U.S. presidential election of Donald Trump to explore how cities can be the center of counted economic, environmental and social progress, despite the rise of nationalism and populism. Chicago Mayor Rahm Emmanuel, and a British Member of Parliament, Tristram Hunt, gave their views on how cities can be on the front lines of solving the complex challenges in educating children, improving the quality of infrastructure, building vibrant public spaces, and mitigating the effects of climate change.

Summary: Donald Trump will assume the presidency at a time of enormous challenges for our country. As all eyes focus on the president elect, those most capable of confronting these challenges and healing the divisions plaguing the country are the metropolitan areas. They are the engines of the economy and stand at the vanguard of national progress. According to Brookings, as the president elect and the Republican Congress hope to create more jobs and generate more prosperity, they will need to develop productive relationships with the urban, suburban and rural communities contained within the metro areas.

But cities cannot do everything on their own. They need a reliable partner in Washington that upholds the core responsibility of the federal government. Many of President-Elect Trump's campaign positions stand in opposition to these principles and priorities. Cities are now moving into uncharted territory in this new political environment as the Trump era threatens to usher in a toxic mix of tax cuts, reductions in so called entitlement spending, and policy shifts such as against the impact of climate change. As this happens, the responsibility for addressing major societal challenges will fall to local and metropolitan actors more than ever before.

Chicago Mayor Rahm Emmanuel noted unique recent initiatives (such as providing every child education from pre-K through two years of community college) that have helped build Chicago into a global urban capital. Emmanuel has enticed big corporations to come to Chicago, even from as close as Indiana because of the city's outstanding infrastructure. The city is trying to reduce its high crime rate through prevention programs for at-risk youths, empowerment efforts for parents and communities to reduce neighborhood violence, and better policing strategies. In addition, the Mayor has instigated environmental improvements with a River Walk.

The UK's Tristram Hunt said the Brexit vote appealed to the voters with lower education, lower-income workers who are fearful of the impact of immigration. They wanted to leave the EU.

Brookings Centennial Scholar **Bruce Katz** concluded the discussion by recommending the following:

- Cities and metropolitan areas need to insist that the federal government lead—acting with vision, direction, and purpose where cities and metropolitan areas cannot succeed on their own.
- Cities and metro areas need to describe—with “evidence, granularity, and vigor”—the implication of the troubling changes proposed by the Trump Administration and engage in lively legislative debate about them.
- Changes in the provision of federal resources to cities and metro areas should be based on the principle of making federal investments more effective, not reducing their size.
- A New Localism can encourage private sector investment in cities and metro areas to complement federal resources.
- We need to bridge the chasm that divided cities and rural areas. This will not happen in Washington DC. Metropolitan communities need to perfect a new style of ‘collaborative governance’. Coming together as a nation is not solely dependent on the federal government – cities and metros have enormous potential that has yet to be realized.

Gretchen Bloom is a member of the Public Policy Committee. In future publications, we will share her “WNDC Roving Reporter” commentaries (see also below) of interesting programs and events.

CNN's Van Jones Explores "The Messy Truth" about Donald Trump

Progressive CNN commentator Van Jones, an African American who supported Bernie Sanders in the primaries, was highly outspoken in his distaste for Donald Trump, famously calling him a "turd that could not be polished." To explore the election results, on December 6, Jones took a journalistic tour of some states that had voted for Obama in 2008 and/or 2012 but voted for Trump this year.

A Rust Belt family visited by Jones had voted twice for Obama, but this year, all but one (the wife/mother) voted for Trump because only he had come to their neighborhood to express concern for their economic problems. Although they did not like either candidate's morals or Trump's exploitation of bigotry, they want CHANGE, which Trump said he would deliver.

Host **Van Jones** apologized for the 'white lash' comments (retweeted by Trump) that he had made about the White Nationalists' event in the Reagan Building organized by the Alt Right. Republican commentator **Ana Navarro**, who voted for Hillary, described her shock at the rise in hate crimes since the election. The Federal Government needs to ensure safety in this diverse country, she said, and she criticized Trump for his current "adulation tours" to "thank" voters who had elected him.

Some of the most intriguing comments came from filmmaker **Michael Moore**, a native of the beleaguered Flint, Michigan. Moore reminded Jones that he had predicted Trump's victory for the following reasons:

- 1) **Midwest Math—the Rust Belt Brexit:** Four traditionally Democratic states (MI, OH, PA, WI) now have Republican governors and are suffering from a broken industrial base. People are angry, embittered, feeling broken and abandoned by the Democrats.
- 2) **Angry White Men:** White men who feel they are losing power don't want a "Feminazi" in the White House. They fear that she would be followed by gay and then transgender presidents.
- 3) **The Hillary Problem:** Clinton is 'hugely unpopular.' Nearly 70 percent of voters think she is untrustworthy and dishonest. Her "old politics" do not generate enthusiasm, and her hawkishness (vote for the Iraq war) causes concern.
- 4) **The Depressed Sanders Vote:** Bernie's supporters would vote for Hillary but not with enthusiasm. And some will vote for a third-party candidate. Also, Tim Kaine did not excite them either.
- 5) **The Jesse Ventura Effect:** Some voters will vote for Trump, not because they like him, but just because they can and no one will know. They will be laughing as they exercise that private power, just as when Minnesotans did when they elected crazy wrestler Jesse Ventura as their governor.

"Hurt people holler," concluded Jones, and the Dems did not listen. They were in denial, and now they are in a blind panic.

Challenge for WNDC: We must decide how to engage in meeting the challenge posed by Donald Trump, as outlined by Michael Moore. We must stand our ground and help prevent the suffering Trump will inflict on American citizens, including many who voted for him.

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