

WNDC

Political Dispatch

Newsletter | September 2017



From the Committee on Public Policy and Political Action

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.

“Leadership for Prosperity” - Support Democrats

I am grateful to have been elected to chair the public policy committee, as Vice President for Public Policy and Political Action.

We have a momentous task ahead of us to protect and defend our democracy and our American values. A taxpayer funded voter suppression commission attacks the right to vote in the name of shutting down non-existent fraud. In the states, Republicans aggressively gerrymander districts to ensure election results skewed in their favor. The separate but equal judicial, executive, and legislative pillars of government established in our Constitution are under continuous attack. Trends facilitating authoritarianism include the denial, on religious grounds, of the legitimacy of a secular state.

As your chair, I will have as my highest priority winning the election of 2018. This task will include creating materials for grassroots campaigning, including WNDC positions for the Democratic Party. Messaging on Democratic proposals for necessary adjustments to the provisions of the Affordable Care Act remains a top priority and an election-winning booster. We will develop programs that will improve the health and education of children. Other high priority issues would be exposing the corruption of top officials in the current administration, including possible criminality, and a pro-active defense of “government.”

Unlike the President with his personalistic loyalties, we care for other Americans as our fellow men and women and will work for their well-being and happiness.

I am delighted to see the large number of new WNDC members and I encourage you to contact me to talk about your interests. The PPC welcomes your talents and participation. I am announcing the establishment of a new Task Force on Foreign Policy and a Task Force on Populism. I am also announcing the new position of Special Assistant to the PPC Chair. Other announcements will follow.

—Elizabeth Clark, Vice President for Public Policy and Political Action, and Chair, Task Force on Foreign Policy

Task Force on Foreign Policy Mission Statement

The WNDC Task Force on Foreign Policy will have as its top priority following US-Russia relations, including disseminating information and initiating action on investigations into collusion between Russia and Trump campaign officials to bring about a Trump victory in the 2016 elections. A second priority will be to aggressively counter the Trump Administration's stated overall foreign policy strategy, namely, to engage only in one-on-one interactions with other countries, rejecting multilateral diplomacy and joint action. The Task Force also will work to advance human rights policy and actions as a key element of US leadership in the world. The Task Force will closely monitor dangerous international situations.

—Elizabeth Clark, Vice President for Public Policy and Political Action, and Chair, Task Force on Foreign Policy

Task Force on Populism Mission Statement

Donald Trump won the electoral vote because enough white, working class voters across the country who normally vote for Democrats -- especially in a handful of industrial Midwestern States -- voted for him instead of Clinton. His Electoral College win has left a lot of Democrats asking: How could this have happened? Who are the Trump voters? How can they be influenced? What is going on?

The mission of the Task Force on Populism is threefold:

1. To gain an understanding of who these voters are and the reasons why they voted for Trump, not excluding the issue of religious identity.
2. To determine what needs to happen to address their concerns and recapture their loyalty to the Democratic Party.
3. To develop specific strategies, action plans, and recommendations for making this happen.

—Joe Howell, Chair, Task Force on Populism

WNDC Strongly Opposes President Trump's Withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement

On June 1st, the president announced that the United States would unilaterally withdraw from the Paris Climate Agreement, the worldwide agreement on limiting climate change spearheaded by former President Obama. On August 4th, the U.S. State Department delivered the official notice to the United Nations. Regardless of the reasons for this action, we believe it is appalling and wrong-headed. It is a symptom of America's moving backward, withdrawing across the board from its historic leadership position.

Our planned withdrawal means a loss of American commitment to fighting what is arguably the biggest threat not only to a healthy Earth but also to our very health and well-being as a people. It means a loss of significant technological and scientific contributions the U.S. could make, and of U.S. funds to assist developing nations in combating the disastrous effects of climate change. Ironically, we are ceding world leadership on climate action to China.

The withdrawal demonstrates a failure to realize that we **will** pay for turning our back on cooperation with the rest of the world. If we do not participate in steps to cut greenhouse gas emissions and to develop responses to climate-driven natural disasters, it will cost us dearly in terms of our own national security interests worldwide, and in the near-term future of our children and our civilization.

The WNDC encourages all Americans, especially our members and supporters, to advocate with our state, local, and national representatives, and the public for meaningful action on climate change. We especially urge everyone to support candidates for public office who will push for America to stop withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement and retake our leadership role in this fight for the future of our planet.

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Climate Change Endangers National Security

The Trump Administration is incredibly short-sighted in its denial of the reality of climate change and the threats it poses to our own national security. The Administration and our congressional leaders need to wake up and understand the near-term dangers of climate change to the security and well-being of America.

Our military **does** understand these dangers, according to Dr. Sherri Goodman, Senior Fellow, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and former First Deputy Undersecretary of Defense (Environment Security), who spoke April 11, 2017, at the WNDU on water stress and national security. She described the danger of climate change, and how the military has been addressing the risks.

One immediate impact of climate change is on the health of our troops from increasingly high temperatures at bases in the U.S. and overseas. Further, U.S. military installations located on coastlines are vulnerable to sea level rise and inundations from coastal storms.

The Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) is a study by the United States Department of Defense that analyzes strategic objectives and potential military threats, and describes the United States' military doctrine. In the last QDR in 2014, climate change was reported: "As greenhouse gas emissions increase, sea levels are rising, average global temperatures are increasing, and severe weather patterns are accelerating....The pressures caused by climate change...are threat multipliers that will aggravate stressors abroad such as poverty, environmental degradation, political instability, and social tensions – conditions that can enable terrorist activity and other forms of violence."

Examples of countries experiencing water stress driven by climate change include Pakistan, which is undergoing agricultural challenges due to lower water flow from shrinking glaciers and recent unpredictable fluctuations in the monsoon. Bangladesh also is extremely vulnerable to sea level rise, as much of the country is already near sea level. Future Bangladeshi refugees from a rising Indian Ocean could number more than 20 million, a major threat to global stability.

The near-term opening of an ice-free Arctic Ocean to increased commerce raises the risk of accidents and oil spills, and could result in direct confrontations with Russia.

Other water stress hot spots are those affected by drought, including parts of India and parts of the Middle East. A major factor underlying the horrific Syrian civil war was a six-year drought, where climate refugees became fodder for rebellion and terrorism.

Water stress is affecting the United States as well, from California drought followed by flooding, to sudden downpours and resultant flash floods in several parts of the country. Sunny day flooding is common in Miami Beach, and, according to Dr. Goodman, is now appearing in Tidewater Virginia, site of several major Navy bases.

On the hopeful side are the American military's understanding of the nexus of climate change and national security and the steps it is taking to increase use of renewable sources of energy. The 2014 QDR reports: "The Department has invested in energy efficiency, new technologies, and renewable energy sources to make us a stronger and more effective fighting force." The Navy launched "The Great Green Fleet" in 2016, replacing 50% of petroleum fuel with biofuels, "in an effort to deploy the most energy efficient and modern fleet anywhere in the world." (U.S. Navy, "Energy, Environment and Climate Change," 2017).

In the US, state and local leaders are moving to reduce risks and increase resiliency to climate instability. Other countries, especially China and the EU, are leaping ahead with developing renewable energy sources. Costs of solar and wind energy are dropping, while worldwide reliance on coal is decreasing.

It is urgent that our strategy for national security include slowing climate change by reducing carbon production and adopting resiliency measures for coping with the climate fluctuations happening now. Pretending this problem does not exist is a recipe for disaster.

—Jean Stewart, Chair, Earth and Environment Task Force

Money Talks

Your banking and investment choices can have a negative or positive impact on society and the environment. You can maximize the positive and minimize the negative, including reducing the financial, economic, and physical risks of abrupt and irreversible climate change. In fact, consumers are driving greater market transparency, disclosure, sustainability, and accountability.

In July 2016, the Army Corp of Engineers approved construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL), the massive oil pipeline that would stretch 1,172 miles from North Dakota through South Dakota and Iowa to Illinois. The DAPL would carry 570,000 barrels of crude oil per day.

Nearly 40 mega-banks are providing financing for the DAPL, including JP Morgan Chase, Bank of America, Wells Fargo, Citicorp, among others. Activists are calling on individuals around the world to cancel their banking relationships with these mega-banks. As of today, over \$4.4 billion has been pulled out of these banks by small and large customers. This is one way we can use our pocketbook to help save our planet.

— *Marcie Cohen, Vice President for Administration*

Downgrading Diplomacy

After Secretary of State Rex Tillerson sought to dial back the nuclear brinkmanship when President Trump threatened “fire and fury” against North Korea, White House deputy assistant Sebastian Gorka told a journalist it was “nonsensical” for the Secretary to comment on the “military situation.”

This reflects downgrading the use of diplomacy as a policy tool under Trump, the preference for military-backed rhetorical threats, and the assumption that somehow military and political objectives are unrelated rather than seeing war as a last resort extension of politics.

U.S. political leadership in the United Nations and other multilateral organizations is a key to calming the crisis with North Korea. This is Secretary Tillerson’s highest priority, not something he should keep quiet about.

This White House reflects the same Republican mentality that led to U.S. military intervention in Iraq, ignoring State Department planning and advice. Following the war, the State Department produced a comprehensive plan on rebuilding Iraq, which also was not used or consulted. In both cases, these failures set back U.S. goals of stability in the region and led to enormous economic and human cost.

These mistakes must not be repeated.

—*Elizabeth Clark, Vice President for Public Policy and Political Action, and Chair, Task Force on Foreign Policy*

