

WNDC

Political Dispatch

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From the Committee on Public Policy and Political Action

Commentary

Trump Intends Dictatorship and the End of Liberal Democratic Norms*

Trump's actions to tear down America's alliances reached new heights when he cancelled his signature to the G-7 communiqué issued on June 9. Not only did he insult this coalition of democracies, which once was proudly led by America, but also he was particularly insulting to the prime minister of our main ally, Canada. This dismissal of our longtime allies came just as Trump made nice to North Korea's Kim Jong Un – a dictator who has killed his close relatives, puts large numbers of his citizens in concentration camps, and can call out the military to kill anyone at any time or on a whim.

What does this tell us about Trump, and what should be our response to him? Is Trump's behavior to fulfill campaign promises, and, if so, what do we learn from his electorate's reaction? Are these actions from a desire to accrue dictatorial powers?

Trump has indeed explicitly renounced human rights and democracy as factors in his foreign policy and supported the practice of torture. He also insists he is above the law, able to pardon himself. Trump clearly prefers not to deal with the leader of a democracy like Justin Trudeau, by Trump's definition "weak." Trump does not want to deal with European societies who have chosen not to militarize their societies, instead mistakenly castigating them for their small average tariff of 3%. Instead, he has chosen to consort with fellow dictators Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping, China's President for life.

America will have no chance of returning to its norms and values and democratic institutions if Trump isn't curbed soon. We must take back the Senate and the House of Representatives to effectuate these curbs and prevent his reelection – if he is still in office in 2020. Hopefully not.

--Elizabeth Spiro Clark, Chair, Committee on Public Policy and Political Action

* This Commentary first appeared in our *Issues Watch*, June 15, 2018

Singapore Summit

The Singapore Summit between President Trump and Kim Jong Un was clearly more than just a media event. It was the first meeting between an American president and North Korean leader, and it opened the road to a diplomatic process that could lead to the denuclearization of North Korea. In the long run, a peace agreement could lead to the end of the Korean War. As President Clinton said, Americans should "be rooting for President Trump to succeed with the North Korea negotiations."

At the same time, criticism of President Trump is certainly legitimate. The President displayed a form of amateur diplomacy and there was no serious preparation for the meeting.

President Trump reversed the normal process in which aides to leaders come up with an agreement and then the leaders meet to sign it.

Plus, President Trump provided a certain legitimacy to Kim Jong Un, who is one of the worst human rights violators – murdering thousands of his own people.

Unfortunately, the summit came after President Trump snubbed America's allies at the G-7 meeting, creating the impression that he's friendlier with Kim than with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

There's also the perception that Kim won more concessions than Trump did at the summit.

In any case, we have to be prepared for a year or two of negotiating that could eventually transform the balance of power in Northeast Asia and require the US to make critical decisions about its military relationship with Japan and South Korea, and its evolving ties with China.

--Alyn Hadar, Chair, Foreign Policy Task Force

The Ultimate Masters' "Lashes of the Whip" on the Backs of *Those People*/

Concentration Camps of Children Whose Parents Are Seeking Asylum and Confiscation of Taxpayer Monies Meant for Health Care and the Welfare of Children and Families

The fascist-like abductions of thousands of children from the arms of their parents who cross our southern borders to seek sanctuary is the culmination of the social agenda of #45's and virtually all of his Republican "true believers."

We should not be surprised. From the day of #45's inauguration his "Us/Them" apartheid platform has endeared Trump to his American voter base. That far right Republican base adores policies that disparage *those people*, such as Muslims, Spanish speaking "breeders," "murderous MS13 drug traffickers," most other asylum seekers, and darker skinned American citizens labeled as "food stamp thugs," "ignorant bums," or "druggies."

Not only are we told to be very afraid of *those people* but also we are warned that billions of dollars of taxpayer money will be wasted on welfare for *them* because *they* do not have money or skills or are too young or too ill to work. The attacks on *those people* began immediately with the "Muslim travel ban" that forbade entrance to America by citizens from particular Middle Eastern countries. Many of those who were affected were actually American citizens.

Next on the #45 "hit list" has been the destruction of the Affordable Care Act because it facilitates health care for most of *those people* and is partially taxpayer funded. By executive decree, 7 billion dollars has been stripped from CHIP (Children's Health Insurance Program), and 8 million dollars has been extracted from Medicaid and Medicare. Additionally, there have been multiple efforts to "block grant" Medicaid, which would allow state governors to divert health care monies to the construction of golf courses, etc.

Now two (red) states have filed lawsuits to remove the mandate that every citizen must purchase health insurance in order to enlarge the insurance "risk pool." Without healthy citizens in the risk pool, fellow Americans with catastrophic accidents/illnesses would be priced out of health care and left to die. If both lawsuits are successful, insurance companies will gain a tremendous windfall and the structure of the ACA (Affordable Care Act) will be destroyed.

SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) is also under attack. Several (red) states are demanding a "work requirement" for people to receive continued food assistance. The problem is that many recipients are too old or too disabled to work, or are new mothers with young babies to care for. Lastly, Dr. Ben Carson, head of Housing and Urban Development, has decided that recipients of rental assistance are not contributing enough money to their landlords. So their rent costs have tripled. Of course this policy is in the name of "saving" money for the government. This is the very same public servant who spent \$31,000 on a new table for his office. Tragically, Americans are witnessing our sense of community being fractured by religious bigotry, racism, economic classicism, and general fear instilled daily by #45, Republican members of Congress and Republican state legislators, right wing media, and many well-known televangelist ministers. We must speak out and rally and march and VOTE for mercy, and kindness, and compassion. "Do Unto Others as You Would Have Them Do Unto You" must be a renewed ethic. We cannot rest until our "better angels" are resurrected for ourselves and our children yet to be born.

--Karen Pataky, Chair, Health Policy Task Force

This National Security Issue is Fake

The administration is trying to prop up the coal industry and aging nuclear power plants artificially through the US Energy Department. A leaked memo directs power companies to purchase power generated by coal-fired plants and nuclear plants. Details of the draft memo, dated May 29 and circulated ahead of a National Security Council meeting, were first reported by Bloomberg News. According to the memo, the US Department of Energy (DOE) could exercise emergency authority under national security laws to force grid operators to buy electricity from coal and nuclear facilities,

The administration's rationale for this move is resiliency in the face of a national emergency, stating in the memo that energy from these sources is "reliable," and "stored" at these facilities. It further states that energy from renewable resources like wind and solar is "intermittent," and therefore places the US power grid at risk from attack, natural disaster, and other threats to national security. CNBC reported that IF the administration follows this proposal, "that would mean the administration will force electric grid operators to buy power from plants that have become uncompetitive and are at risk of closing."

There were immediate statements of support for this plan from coal industry spokesmen such as Murray Energy, and coal industry advocate Sen. Manchin (D - West Virginia). At the same time, there was a major outcry against this nonsense from an unusual group of bedfellows, from the American Petroleum Institute to the Sierra Club. Grid operators were also highly critical of this expensive and unnecessary support of declining industries. Market forces are reducing dependence on coal and nuclear energy; propping them up with the excuse of "national security" will not save them in the long run.

What the administration refuses to see is right in front of it. In the short run, the very real major threat to national security, and our planet, is climate change.

The best way to deal with the impact on the power grid of natural disasters, such as the increases in flooding and wildfires happening right now, is to reduce our carbon output, not increase it. That includes ending our dependence on coal. POTUS is not going to "make coal great again" by crying national security.

--Jean Stewart, Chair, Earth and Environment Task Force

1. bloomberg.com; May 31, updated June 1
2. CNBC.com; June 1, updated June 4

Democratic Party seems to be leaving me out

As a white male millennial I am feeling left out of the Democratic Party's outreach. I understand the implications of the #MeToo movement, LGBTQ inclusion etc., but my demographic should not be conceded to the Republican Party. There are significant numbers of us who have grown up in communities of inclusion and we are not the enemy.

Many of us are facing significant student loan debt, uncertain job prospects, and high housing costs in areas with low unemployment so male millennials should be a target for the Democratic Party's message but somehow it doesn't feel like it. The party has a chance to speak to young adults with one voice. First, recognize the huge impact of the Great Recession on this generation. Second, propose work and community service opportunities that help young people retire student debt. Thirdly, propose housing allowances similar to military benefits for young teachers, which equalize housing costs so that more energetic, smart young people will be enticed to become public school teachers, especially in underperforming areas. Finally, consider a proposal for a more robust system of vocational, technical, and apprenticeship programs for students not interested in four-year degrees.

The Republican status quo has done an excellent job of leaving many young men behind but they have also done a good job of scapegoating minority groups. The Democratic Party must not respond in kind by scapegoating young white males either. For huge millennial voter turnout in 2018 and especially 2020 there must be inclusive proposals that bring young adults out to Vote For Something. No more protest voting.

--Submitted by WNDC member Hollin Dwiggin and millennial voter Wells Dwiggin Thomason

Major Gun Reform Advocacy Groups Make Candidate Endorsements

The activities around the Club supporting the “March for Our Lives” on the heels of the Parkland High School students’ activist movement for stronger gun policies gave us all a much-needed injection of new-found optimism and enthusiasm. While the student movement continues its momentum by way of registering young voters, I have struggled to identify concrete ways the task force could affect real change beyond demanding more social responsibility from investment managers, businesses, and corporations. A task force briefing in April by the Legislative Director of the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence dashed our hopes for any meaningful legislation from this Congress, so the only real chance we have in this regard is to change the makeup of Congress. As we were told at that briefing, there is a “cultural shift” regarding the NRA and a demonstrated shift toward gun safety as a top electable issue. Giffords PAC recently revealed polling data showing that “candidates who stand for gun safety get a 7-point boost over opponents who side with the gun lobby.”

Citizens need and frankly deserve representatives in the House and Senate who are committed to end gun violence, and that will happen ONLY if we are knowledgeable about which candidates these are and give them the support they need. The following is a list of federal candidates recently endorsed by leading gun reform advocacy groups:

Coalition to Stop Gun Violence

US House:

Rep. Ami **Bera** (CA-7)
Rep. Salud **Carbajal** (CA-24)
Linda **Coleman** (NC-2). Challenging Republican incumbent Rep George Holding
Angie **Craig** (MN-2). Challenging Republican incumbent Rep Jason Lewis. (Note: 2 other Democratic primary contenders to vie for nomination on Aug. 14th.)
Lizzie Pannill **Fletcher** (TX-7). Challenging Republican incumbent Rep. John Culberson.
Katie **Hill** (CA-25). Challenging Republican incumbent Rep. Steve Knight
Chrissy **Houlahan** (PA-6). Challenging Republican Greg McCauley in newly-redrawn congressional district
Joseph **Kopser** (TX-21). Challenging Republican candidate Chip Roy for open seat vacated by retirement of Republican Rep. Lamar Smith
Lucy **McBath** (GA-6). In Democratic primary runoff with Kevin Abel to challenge Republican incumbent Rep Karen Handel
Rep. Stephanie **Murphy** (FL-7)
Betsy **Rader** (OH-14). Challenging Republican incumbent Rep. David Joyce
George **Scott** (PA-10). Challenging Republican incumbent Rep. Scott Perry in newly-redrawn congressional district.
Abigail **Spanberger** (VA-7). Challenging Republican incumbent Rep. Dave Brat
Jennifer **Wexton** (VA-10). Challenging Republican incumbent Rep. Barbara Comstock

US Senate:

Sen. Tim **Kaine** (VA)
Sen. Amy **Klobuchar** (MN)
Sen. Chris **Murphy** (CT)
Sen. Bill **Nelson** (FL)
Beto **O'Rourke** (TX). Challenging Republican incumbent Sen. Ted Cruz

Giffords PAC

Gabby Giffords' 501c(4) and the Giffords PAC have endorsed 34 candidates, many of the same candidates as the CSGV and the Brady Campaign (Feinstein, Houlahan, Sherrill, Lee, Cisneros, Craig, Rosen, and Brown). To see all endorsements in a tidy package, visit www.giffords.org/endorsements.

(Quote from the Brady Campaign)

“The intensity of pro-gun violence prevention voters has never been stronger. If you stand with the overwhelming majority of voters for common-sense gun reform, you will be rewarded at the ballot box. If you stand with the NRA and the gun lobby, you will be looking for a new job.”

--Shelly Livingston, Acting Chair, Task Force to Prevent Gun Violence

Brady Campaign

US House:

Rep. Brendan **Boyle** (PA-2)
Brian **Caforio** (CA-25). Challenging Republican incumbent Rep. Steve Knight.
Gil **Cisneros** (CA-39). Challenging Republican candidate Young Kim in open seat vacated by Republican Rep. Ed Royce.
Will **Cunningham** (NJ-2). Challenging Republican candidate Seth Grossman in open seat vacated by Republican Rep. Frank LoBiondo
Rep. Ruben **Gallego** (AZ-7)
Josh **Harder** (CA-10). Challenging Republican incumbent Rep. Jeff Denham
Andy **Kim** (NJ-3). Challenging Republican incumbent Rep. Tom MacArthur.
Joseph **Kopser** (TX-21). Challenging Republican candidate Chip Roy for open seat vacated by retirement of Republican Rep. Lamar Smith
Susie **Lee** (NV-3). Challenging Republican Danny Tarkanian in open seat vacated by Dem. Rep. Jacky Rosen, who is running for US Senate.
Rep. Alan **Lowenthal** (D-CA-47)
Rep. Carolyn **Maloney** (NY-12)
Rep. Stephanie **Murphy** (FL-7)
Rep. Scott **Peters** (CA-52)
Katie **Porter** (CA-45). Challenging Republican incumbent Rep. Mimi Walters.
Harley **Rouda** (CA-48). Challenging Republican incumbent Rep. Dana Rohrabacher.
Mikie **Sherrill** (NJ-11). Challenging Republican Jay Webber in open seat vacated by retiring Republican Rep. Rodney Frelinghuysen.

US Senate

Sen. Dianne **Feinstein** (CA)
Sen. Tim **Kaine** (VA)
Sen. Robert **Menendez** (NJ)
Rep. Beto **O'Rourke** (TX)
Rep. Jacky **Rosen** (NV)

News from the Elections/GOTV Task Force

by Melinda Burrell, Task Force Chair

#MeToo for the Midterms: “I win, too!”

The last few months have been heady ones for considering massive change on our national political scene. Women have been running – and winning – in breathtaking numbers in the wave of recent primaries. Joyfully, we'll have an unprecedented quantity of women candidates to choose from in 2018. Who are these women? The vast majority are Democrats. More than half have not run for office before. Most are public servants – teachers, doctors and nurses, military personnel, and others. One such nurse, Lauren Underwood, is the first African-American to win her party's nomination in her IL-14 district, after beating six white men. Many others are also historical “firsts.” They include the first female gubernatorial candidates in several states, the first Native American woman to serve in the House (Deb Haaland, D-NM-1), and the first woman potentially to represent Iowa in the US House of Representatives (Abby Finkenauer IA-1 and/or Cindy Axne IA-3).

Some say this is how we rebuild our ethical norms – by voting in those we most trust, the women who are at the centers of our communities. Just think what this can mean! We've already seen that women from both sides of the aisle are more likely to put the nation in front of party to solve our problems. It was a bipartisan group of women senators who averted the 2013 government shutdown. It's up to all of us.

Be part of the Blue Wave!

The GOP is on the ground in every state now, with field offices and paid organizers in every state. This is months ahead of their schedule in previous years. While progressive activism is at record heights now, we can't take the Blue Wave for granted. How can you join it?

Here are some easy (and fun!) things that new activists can do:

- **Commit to identifying 10 friends or family members who might not get to the polls.** Ensure they do by talking up their Democratic candidate, explaining why you find voting important, and helping them check their registration status... and get to the polls on November 6.
- **Choose some candidates to support financially.** Most of these women are the underdogs as they've not run before. Name recognition is key, and yard signs and videos are crucial to boosting these women's profiles. Even small contributions of \$10 or \$20 can help.
- **Register voters.** GOP-driven legal changes around voter registration are a huge threat to our democracy. Fight this by joining a voter registration drive in your area. These usually are weekend activities that take only 3-4 hours and are extremely rewarding.
- **Post or tweet about issues you care about and link to groups or people who are making a difference on those issues.** We are enormously influenced by our peers. Take on that role of influencer for your community.
- **Convene a postcard writing party** to encourage voters to get to the polls: www.postcardstovoters.org.
- **Think long-term.** This year is crucial, which is why WNDC is focusing on defending incumbent Dems and supporting challengers who truly have a chance. But we need to have a long game as well. We need to be grooming many new candidates, showing them we have their backs if they dare to run, and showing local activists that we support their organizing as well. Consider helping out the occasional inspiring long-shot. She just might win next time!

Candidates to Watch

Fighting the odds, and beating them with our support?

Jessica Morse will be battling for California's 4th district against incumbent Tom McClintock, a 61-year-old man in power off and on since 1982. He starts the fall campaign with a 60-40 lead but Morse already is proving formidable.

Jessica grew up in Tahoe as a fifth generation Californian from the 4th District, unlike her competitor. The environment is her signature issue, and her professional experience working in the foreign service gives her deep insight into national security. She was backed by the Democratic establishment who like her approach to finding solutions to problems of food insecurity and poverty in her district, which is land rich but cash poor. Although some perceive a November win for Morse to be a long shot, particularly in a Republican-leaning district that Trump won by 54 percent in 2016, she has the will and personality to win. Learn more about her and consider supporting her for this run or in the future: www.morse4congress.com.

--Gretchen Bloom

An Historic First

Deb Haaland is running in New Mexico's 1st Congressional District. If she wins, she will be the first female Native American elected to a Congressional seat. While the 1st is currently considered safely Democratic, we can't be complacent: the Republicans targeted the district earlier this year, and the NRCC has nearly \$60M in its war chest. As a result, we should be vigilant and prepared to jump in to help defend this seat if needed.

It's easy to be enthusiastic about Haaland. A member of the Pueblo of Laguna, she is a community activist with 20 years of campaign experience and a stint as chair of the New Mexico Democratic Party under her belt. Her top priority is climate change and renewable energy, both for environmental reasons and because she believes renewables will create thousands of well-paying jobs. Her other issues include stopping deportations and protecting DREAMERS; Medicare for All; expanding Social Security; \$15 national minimum wage; debt-free college; national paid family leave; and universal childcare and pre-K education. She's endorsed by Emily's List, Congressional Black Caucus, NOW, Planned Parenthood Action Fund, and many other groups, former and current office holders and tribal leaders, and many unions.

Her Republican opponent, Janice Arnold-Jones, is a former state legislator. Her web page and record is nearly a blank slate. Regardless, given her support by the NRCC, we expect her to fall in line with all of the Republican Party's hard-right agenda, including its anti-immigrant, anti-woman, and anti-environment policies and legislation.

--Patricia Zweibel