

WNDC



Political Dispatch

Newsletter | May 2019

From the Committee on Public Policy and Political Action

Elizabeth Spiro Clark, Chair

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Trump Games and “Socialism”

Trump games are always bad. He is playing a bad game with trying to tag Democrats as “socialist” and setting up socialism in opposition to capitalism.

Commentators are beginning to highlight that this is a completely false dichotomy. Trump and his extremist cohorts aren't really talking about capitalism. They are talking about being for or against government. If you think that you need publicly accountable referees to make a free market, i.e., capitalism, work you need government – at all levels. Trump wants everyone to believe that supporting any need for government, outside the military, is equivalent to being a communist. Tea Party Republican extremists who are running Trump's show and especially a fanatic like Betsy DeVos are usually upfront in believing that private charity and the private business sector are the answer to all the social safety net sectors of our national life. They believe charity is the answer, i.e., the free decision of a wealthy person to give money to a poor person. The minute you get government involved in helping people you are acting in a way that is counter to their ideology and religion. You are getting between them and their God, who is the only power that matters. That relationship must remain uncontaminated by any secular power structures in determining what they do.

Leaving out government also means leaving out democracy. It is democratic institutions that create structures embodying the truth of America as a community of people and that all Americans are deserving of certain basic rights. This creation of a community of Americans who work together and respect each other as equals also creates efficient and fair capitalism - a mix of the public and the private in terms of the economy and in terms of basic standards of living that create equal education and healthcare access. Trump would like to privatize everything with respect to the economy, and would be perfectly comfortable if you ended up with mega corporations -- the winners in a capitalist war -- ruling the economy and dictating the rules that all Americans would have to live under. Democratic rules are still shakily built into our system and into our private economy.

The one thing Trump does want government for, or rather does want for himself, is the military. He pretty explicitly believes that in declaring a national emergency he could use the military to squash any opposition to himself.

The real opposition we should be talking about is the opposition of dictatorship and democracy. A functioning democracy is the only system that holds power accountable. Trump and those he is surrounding himself with want no accountability.

– Elizabeth Spiro Clark, Vice President for Public Policy and Political Action

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What's New on the Gun Violence Prevention Front

WNDC and House of Representatives Actions in April:

- WNDC joined 221 other advocacy organizations in signing a gun violence research letter sent to House and Senate leadership and members of both Appropriations Committees. The letter generally speaks to the public health emergency of gun violence and specifically urges Congress to appropriate 50 million dollars in the FY 2020 budget for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Institutes of Health to fund gun violence research.
- Members of the Task Force to Prevent Gun Violence contacted via email or phone WNDC "National Members" (those living outside the DC metro area in various states), asking them to help in our efforts to demand that Senate Majority Leader McConnell allow a conversation on the Senate Floor on S. 42, the universal background checks bills, something 97% of Americans support.
- Task Force also joined DC Moms Demand Action for "Happy Hour Phone Banking" at the Club on Thursday evenings to help affect change in laws that keep all Americans safe from gun violence.
- On April 4, the House voted overwhelmingly to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) with an important gun safety provision that would close the "boyfriend loophole" to keep guns away from convicted domestic abusers and stalkers. The fight now goes to the Senate, whose cowardly NRA-owned leader has so far refused to break loose from his master's leash. So, we still await a Senate Floor conversation on universal background checks and now VAWA, complete with this vital provision, something, of course, the NRA opposes.
- At a testy April 10 hearing by the House Committee on Education and Labor, Betsy Devos pushed for arming school teachers; however, the Giffords Law Center was able to uncover certain documents regarding this unlawful decision to permit the use of federal grant funds to arm teachers in classrooms across America. Read more [here](https://bit.ly/2VbTta5): <https://bit.ly/2VbTta5>

Upcoming events where you can learn and make a difference

- **Wednesday, May 1, 1:00-3:00pm, Rm. 121 Cannon House Office Building: De-Escalation Seminar on Capitol Hill "Ending Violence with Education and Training"** (Participate in a discussion about the role community de-escalation can play in reducing or preventing violence in the community. Hosted by Black Women for Positive Change, in cooperation with Congresswoman Gwen Moore (D-WI).)
- **Series of Gun Violence Prevention (GVP) Forums by DC Area Places of Worship – Working Together:**
 - Tuesday April 30, 7:00-9:00pm: "The Growing Threat of Gun Violence" (St. John's Episcopal Church, Norwood Parish): Speaker: Rob Wilcox, Everytown.
 - Tuesday, May 7, 7:00-9:00pm: "Finding Common Ground: What Gun Owners Can Teach Us" (Bethesda United Methodist Church) Speaker: David Chipman, Giffords.
 - Wednesday, May 15, 7:00-9:00pm: "Reducing Urban Gun Violence: What Works and How You Can Help" (Temple Sinai). Speaker from the DC Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement and others.
 - Learn more here: <https://www.washmorefeet.org/>

– Shelly Livingston and Ellen McGovern, Co-Chairs, Task Force to Prevent Gun Violence

Was There Ever A Meritocracy: Thoughts on a Scandal

Lying, cheating, bribery, fraud, money laundering. No, not allegations against the current administration but accusations against about 50 people who have been charged with "conspiracy counts of racketeering" in the college admissions scandal. These folks were using a so-called "side door" to get their children enrolled in several prominent colleges. Following a pied-piper of sorts who pedaled "college counseling" and a phony charity, families were assured admission to various institutions of higher learning not for good grades, nor superior athletic abilities, nor hours of community service but in exchange for money. Who knew that in America money would be the ultimate "affirmative action"?

What were these people thinking? What values informed their decisions? On the surface, these families were affluent and connected enough that they could drop \$40k to \$1.2 million in an attempt to ensure a space for their children. These "contributions" were then used to bribe college testing officials and athletic coaches. Students were often admitted to schools via athletic teams even though most of them had never played that sport. Under the guise of a nonprofit charity, these contributions were then deducted from the parents' taxes. Why did these parents feel their children deserved admission to these schools, no matter how they got in? Entitlement? White privilege? Perhaps displeasure in seeing other children, maybe less deserving in their eyes, obtain admission to college on the basis of skin color, ethnicity, social class? Were these parents merely "bull-dozing" down perceived obstacles on the path of success for their children? What about the children? Did they know what their parents were doing? Many students do apply for college on their own with some parental assistance but not the lying and cheating these parents displayed.

What mixed messages did these kids receive? Not smart enough to get in on your own. Rules don't apply to us. This is your birthright.

Is this a microcosm of our current society where the end justifies the means? A society with no ethical behavior, no moral compass? Are we witnessing the destruction of yet another institution, purportedly built on trust and honesty, but fixed and rigged from the start and crumbling under the weight of deceit and corruption?

Though the questions abound, the answers seem especially dire.

– Dianna E. Washington, Ph.D., Chair, Education and Children's Issues Task Force

WNDC Resolutions Presented to the National Federation of Democratic Women

These resolutions, approved by the WNDC Board of Governors on April 17, will be presented as WNDC resolutions to the National Federation of Democratic Women conference in Albany, NY, in June.

Foreign Policy Resolution Affirming Preservation of Global Alliances

WHEREAS April 4, 2019, marked the 70th Anniversary of the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

WHEREAS the United States (U.S.) has greatly benefitted from its role in NATO, the Group of Seven (G7), and other major global alliances in the post-World War II era.

WHEREAS President Donald J Trump has weakened many of these global alliances by: disrespecting established U.S. allies; publicly questioning not only whether the U.S. will honor its international security commitments but also the actual value of the United States' ongoing participation in essential multilateral organizations; praising dictators and despots; criticizing the media and U.S Intelligence agencies; ignoring and/or perpetuating human rights abuses; defunding or underfunding foreign aid and outreach programs; cutting the number of staff and diplomats in the Department of State; failing to fill key ambassadorships; and, withdrawing the United States from key international agreements, ranging from the Paris Agreement to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (aka the Iran nuclear deal).

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED: That because preserving and expanding global alliances is essential to the United States' national security and protection of its preeminence in the world order, the National Federation of Democratic Women gives its full support to the United States maintaining and strengthening key existing alliances such as NATO and the G7, pursuing new alliances that strengthen the United States' position in an evolving world, and prioritizing the funding and pursuit of global diplomacy.

– Tracy Weiss, Co-Chair, Foreign Policy Task Force

Foreign Policy Resolution Affirming Preservation of INF Treaty

WHEREAS on December 8, 1987, the United States and the former Soviet Union (now Russia) entered into the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty or Treaty) in which both parties agreed to eliminate their stocks of intermediate- and shorter-range nuclear and conventional ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges of 500 to 5,500 kilometers.

WHEREAS the INF Treaty marked the first time both superpowers agreed to reduce their nuclear arsenals, eliminate an entire category of nuclear weapons, and allow extensive on-site inspections for verification.

WHEREAS on October 20, 2018, President Donald J. Trump announced his intention to “terminate” the INF Treaty, citing concerns about Russian noncompliance and China’s intermediate-range missile arsenal; and on February 2, 2019, suspended U.S. obligations under the INF Treaty and formally announced the United States’ intention to withdraw from the Treaty within six months from that date.

WHEREAS on February 2, 2019, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced that Russia would respond “symmetrically” to the United States’ announcement and officially suspended Russia’s obligations under the INF Treaty.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED: That because nuclear weapons proliferation and war pose the ultimate threats to national security and survival of all life forms, the National Federation of Democratic Women gives its full support to immediate steps by the United States to: (1) preserve and recommit to the INF Treaty; (2) utilize diplomatic means to persuade Russia to recommit to and comply with the INF Treaty; and, (3) add other world powers, including China, as signatories to the Treaty.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: The National Federation of Democratic Women will support candidates and lawmakers who are committed to nuclear nonproliferation and responsible multilateral arms control.

– Tracy Weiss, Co-Chair, Foreign Policy Task Force



Trump Demands Department of Justice Declare the ACA Illegal

Health care has always been shrouded in the underlying values held by each society. We Democrats believe that every life is of equal value, and so we believe health care is a RIGHT, not a privilege. We will not deny health care to anyone living in America regardless of skin color, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, socioeconomic level, or immigration status.

But as of the March 28 Trump campaign rally in Michigan, the top item on the Republican agenda is repealing the Affordable Care Act.

The most recent Democratic step toward universal health care, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) barely passed 219 to 212 and was signed into law by President Obama March 23, 2010. No Republicans voted for the ACA (AKA "Obamacare"). In the past nine years, the ACA, and associated Medicaid expansion, and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) have become deeply embedded in the lives of millions of Americans all over the United States. At the ACA's nine-year anniversary, "Obamacare" has proved to be a grand effort to extend health care to millions of our fellow Americans, many for the first time in their lives.

So why destroy such a life-saving program? It's primarily about the money. Immediately following the 2016 election, Republicans and #45 followed their historic playbook to reduce taxes for their base: the ultra-rich and multinational corporations. But loss of such tax revenues would create a deficit. So the initial effort to repeal the ACA occurred in early 2017 via congressional legislation, but failed. Repeal of the ACA would have pumped trillions of dollars back to the treasury to "pay" for the anticipated tax cuts.

Health care for all of our fellow citizens has never been a conservative/Libertarian/Republican goal. Mo Brooks, Republican congressman, expressed the caste system of the Republican philosophy: "Repealing the Affordable Care Act (and Medicaid expansion) would reduce costs (paid by) ... those people who live good lives." Repealing the ACA has continued to be a major goal of #45 and his supporters, via legislative measures, presidential proclamations, and now judicial fiat. On March 28, 2019, the Department of Justice, under William Barr, stated that all aspects of the ACA are illegal and directed DoJ (Department of Justice) to completely deconstruct the ACA. So, the question of the legality of the ACA will return to the Supreme Court, likely in the next few months.

Again, it's about the money because the Republican base and #45 now have a multi-billion dollar "wall" to finance. But it's also about destroying President Obama's primary legislative accomplishment.

So what will Americans lose? Here is a short though incomplete list.

- 20 million people will lose their ACA insurance and have NO access to their doctors, their hospitals, or their medications. Many will quickly become seriously ill and many will die.
- Americans who retain insurance through the workplace will find increased prescription costs, and also will discover that their insurance no longer covers chronic illnesses (preconditions).
- Pregnancy care and contraception no longer will be required insurance coverage.
- Insurance companies will return to the practice of charging women 50 percent more for their care than men will pay.
- 2.3 million children up to age 26 no longer will have access to health care via their parents' health insurance.
- Without Medicaid expansion, hundreds of hospitals will close, especially children's hospitals.
- Insurance companies again will be allowed to place lifetime caps on the money paid for an individual's care.

Other implications of destruction of the ACA will be forthcoming and we will be watching the state courts closely regarding state initiatives to fill the gap in care for their citizens.

Meanwhile, there is hope. Many state governors realize the importance of the ACA and Medicaid expansion and are pushing back. Physicians' medical associations, hospital associations, nursing, and other professional health care associations are planning extensive resistance.

And our fellow Americans are again letting their representatives know that health care is their #1 concern in 2020 as it was in the 2018 elections.

– Karen Pataky, Chair, Health Policy Task Force