

FOREIGN POLICY NEWS FALL 2020

From Jane Elkin, Chair, Foreign Policy Task Force

Refugees Admitted to US at Lowest Level on Record

The US has capped its annual refugee admission ceiling to 18,000, the lowest number since a high of 200,000 in 1980. Yet, the highest number of people since World War II—71 million people worldwide—are fleeing violence and persecution and are seeking resettlement.

Chinese Religious Persecution of Uighur Muslims

Chinese authorities have razed numerous mosques and other Islamic sacred sites of the Uighur Muslims. Satellite imagery also reveals numerous detention “re-education” facilities in Xinjiang.

Honduran Migrant Caravan

Another caravan of 3000 Honduran migrants, including women and children, which was heading toward the US–Mexico border, has been disbanded by Guatemalan authorities. Since 2018, the Mexican government, at the request of President Trump, has broken up at least seven caravans before they reached the US. The Hondurans were fleeing poverty and unemployment.

Cuccinelli, Immigration Foe, Imposes New Curbs on Student Visas, Foreign Workers

Ken Cuccinelli, Deputy Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Acting Director of the US Citizenship and Immigration Services, and a foe of immigration, recently announced crackdowns of two vulnerable groups of visa holders:

Student visas will be restricted to a fixed end-date, rather than remaining valid as long as an international student is enrolled in school. Foreign students would be limited to 4 years, and students from many Middle Eastern, Asian, and African countries would be limited to 2 years of study in the US. However, many US graduate programs require more than 4 years.

In a move that US Tech companies strongly oppose, DHS and the Labor Department imposed strict pay requirements on H-1B visa program for highly skilled foreign workers, including physicians, engineers, and scientists. Employers will be required to pay foreign workers at the 95th percentile in their field, in a move to prevent foreign workers from “stealing” jobs from American workers. DHS waved the normal regulatory review, which states that the policy changes are essential because of the continuing economic fallout of the pandemic; legal challenges are expected.

2020 Election Interference

The US Intelligence Community believes that Russia is engaged in an effort to damage Democratic nominee Joe Biden's election and that the Kremlin is boosting Trump's candidacy through social media disinformation.

US, Japan, India, and Australia Pledge to Counter China's Expansionist Ambitions

US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, met in Tokyo with the foreign ministers of Japan, India, and Australia and discussed rising tensions between each of their countries and China. Known as the "Quad," the four countries pledged to counter Beijing's expansionist ambitions. (*WSJ* 10/7)

Are Music Video Apos Tik Tok and WeChat Really a National Security Threat?

Federal judges have ruled that the Trump administration's efforts to ban the Chinese-owned Tik Tok and WeChat, the Chinese social media short video aps, on the grounds that the government hasn't provided enough evidence on how the aps would be a threat to national security. The Chinese are adept at the use of algorithms and artificial intelligence to build a following of users, but are music video aps really a national security threat?

NATO Military Exercises Near Vulnerable Belarus

NATO has stationed multinational battalions, totaling 4,000 troops, for training exercises in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Poland, which neighbor Belarus, in an effort to send deterrence messages to Russia. Since 2014, when Russia annexed Ukraine, NATO has maintained defense forces in countries that border the vulnerable Belarus.

IT'S MORE THAN OBAMACARE, ROE, LGBT RIGHTS, FIREARMS POLICY AND....

***From Karen Pataky, Chair, Public Policy & Political Action
Committee, and Chair, Health Policy Task Force***

We are watching and listening to the sham hearing being held to force the appointment of a 9th Supreme Court Justice, during our 2020 national election. This same Senate refused to even interview President Obama's candidate, Merrick Garland, for SCOTUS after the death of Justice Antonin Scalia, although the presidential election of 2016 was still 10 months away.

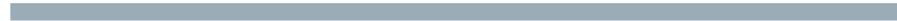
So why the rush? First, it is clear the GOP intends to pander to Trump's strategy of questioning all 2020 election results that would acknowledge Joe Biden as President. Furthermore, Republicans are now employing several types of voter suppression, which Amy Coney Barrett does not view as unconstitutional.

Even if Joe Biden is elected and inaugurated as President, and even if we manage to elect enough Democrats to control the Senate, adding Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court would enable the GOP to completely reverse all social justice initiatives of SCOTUS since the 1930s, due to Barrett's "originalist" or "textualist" judicial philosophy.

Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse eloquently tutored Amy Coney Barrett, and the entire Senate in the frightening truth of the concept of “originalism” advanced by Justice Antonin Scalia and today’s Republican Party. Ms. Barrett has revealed that she agrees that any and all initiatives—such as Social Security, Medicare, Obamacare, desegregation and so forth—might be questioned because the Constitution does not mention such legislation as protected rights. Among such rights, we women could lose our recent right to vote.

Per Sen. Whitehouse, the end goal is the abolition of all “regulations” that might interfere with corporate freedom to enable maximum profit from cutting down forests, continued and expanded fracking projects, and eliminating worker safety protection and consumer protection policies, and more. Regulations also ensure that a person who calls him- or herself a physician, a lawyer, or an electrician is indeed properly credentialed. We could lose these protections as well. Our entire protective governmental structure is at risk.

What to do? GOTV now for every Democrat who runs for President and vote Democratic in every state and county in 2020 and every 2 years thereafter. We cannot go back to 18th century society, which made life wonderful for a few white male landowners. Not ever.



GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION TASK FORCE REPORT

From Ellen McGovern, Chair, Gun Violence Prevention Task Force

TAKE BACK THE SENATE

By the time you read this newsletter, many votes will be in! At this point, it looks very good for the Democrats taking back the Senate, including North Carolina! Despite confirmed October stories of a personal scandal, Cal Cunningham still carries the support of NC voters -- by 6+ votes. Collaborating with Victoria Velasquez and Mindy Burrell and GOTV; awesome! At last, some optimism; “winning” brokers opportunities for Senate passage of GVP bills in 2021!

SCOTUS NOMINATION HEARING & GVP ACTIONS

The Trump administration nominee: Judge Amy Coney Barrett was a “pick” for the NRA, not America, according to the Giffords Pac. Moreover, they say--Barrett’s approach to considering gun cases would be to rely on ‘historical’ interpretation of the Second Amendment, not public safety. Again, by the time, you receive the Newsletter, Barrett will be the Ginsburg replacement on the Court!

ACTIONS

WNDC signed a Letter with 34 other signatories: Brady, Giffords, March For Our Lives, Everytown, and others, Oct. 8, 2020, addressed to the U.S. Senate Leadership and Senate Judiciary Committee, to urge Senators against rushing through the Supreme Court Nomination of Judge Amy Coney Barrett in the midst of a national election. Also, the Court currently has four justices who have publicly indicated an enthusiasm to expand the meaning of the Second Amendment in a way that is at odds with over two hundred years of American jurisprudence and long traditions of gun regulations, and, to undermine, potentially, gun safety laws enacted by democratically-elected legislatures. Mother Jones referenced the letter in an article published last week.

The GVP Task Force joined other GVP groups and organizations in contacting (emails and calls) U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee leaders and members, as well as key Republicans, approximately sixteen, to remind the Senators about their 2016 and 2018 pledges to the American people about not holding hearings or voting on nominees for the Supreme Court during an electoral cycle (remember Judge Garland's situation during the Obama administration). Somehow these Senators came up with a different rationale and/or excuse not to comply with those pledges. While important to pressure these Senators and to remind the American public about these Senators' pledges, we knew the odds of winning, unlikely. Nevertheless, principles are important!

SOCIAL MEDIA

The GVP Task Force worked with the Membership committee and WNDC staff members in developing a 'member survey' to determine which social media platforms WNDC members access and for what purposes. Specifically, GVP wants to know if they are looking at WNDC's platforms and promoting those policy issues, including GVP and other ones. This survey data will help WNDC and PPC task forces in designing social media strategies for accessibility and effectiveness.

GVP TASK FORCE MEETING: NOVEMBER 17, TUESDAY, at 5 pm. The focus: setting priorities and considering strategies to pass Senate legislation in 2021.



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