

From: Bulletin Intelligence
To: Interior@BulletinIntelligence.com
Subject: U S. Department of the Interior News Briefing for Monday, October 30, 2017
Date: Monday, October 30, 2017 6:11:51 AM

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[US Department of the Interior News Briefing](#)



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DOI In The News

Puerto Rick Gov. Rosselló Announces Cancellation Of Whitefish Energy Contract.

On Sunday, Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rosselló announced the cancellation of energy firm Whitefish Energy's contract with the Puerto Rico Electrical Power Authority. On [ABC World News Tonight](#) (10/29, story 5, 2:00, Llamas), Victor Oquendo reported on the "shock announcement from the governor." Rosselló: "I have asked the board of the power authority to invoke the cancellation clause in the contract immediately." Oquendo: "That contract with Whitefish Energy could soon be scrapped after the revelations the Montana power company had just two employees when it was awarded a massive \$300 million contract to restore power across the island," and that Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke "hails from the same town the company is based in." [Politico](#) (10/29, Wilhelm) reports that Zinke said on Friday that he had "'absolutely nothing to do' with the awarding of the contract to Whitefish."

On the [CBS Weekend News](#) (10/29, story 4, 2:00, Quijano), David Begnaud reported, "Three hours after the governor's surprise announcement, Ricardo Ramos, head of the Puerto Rico Electrical Power Authority, announced that the contract will be canceled, but only after Whitefish completes its current work." Ramos: "It becomes effective in 30 days." Begnaud: "So far, Ramos says Whitefish has been paid nearly \$11 million, and there is another \$9.8 million payment that is pending." The [AP](#) (10/29, Coffey, Levin, Fieser) reports that Rosselló also "said that Whitefish will continue with current work, but the contract would then be scrapped – leading to delay of 10 to 12 weeks in completing the work."

On [NBC Nightly News](#) (10/29, story 2, 2:35, Snow), Gabe Gutierrez reported that Whitefish Energy CEO Andy Techmanski said that he "had nothing to hide. ... You used LinkedIn to get a \$300 million contract?" Techmanski: "LinkedIn's going love this, but yeah." Gutierrez: "He strongly denies that [Zinke] or anyone else in the Trump Administration had anything to do with the contract. Still, FEMA said it had significant concerns and never reviewed the document, despite wording that suggested otherwise. ... Techmanski says that language wasn't supposed to be there and had been deleted from an amended version of the contract."

[USA Today](#) (10/29, Gomez) reports, "Democrats and Republicans in Congress have called for investigations, and last week...Rosselló requested that the inspector general of the Department of Homeland Security look into the contract." The [Wall Street Journal](#) (10/29, Scurria) reports that Sens. Maria Cantwell and Ron Wyden have also asked the US Comptroller General to investigate the use of public money under the Whitefish contract. The [New York Times](#) (10/29, Robles, Caron) reports, "Critics have raised questions about why the power authority opted not to request aid from mainland utilities after Hurricane Maria struck the territory."

The [Washington Post](#) (10/29, Mufson) reports that Rosselló's statements have "added to the confusion about the oversight of the utility and the commonwealth, both of which are bankrupt. A financial oversight board Congress created for Puerto Rico is planning to ask a federal court this week for clear authority to examine contracts as small as \$10 million," and a federal judge "is overseeing the restructuring of Puerto Rico's more than \$70 billion in debts."

Before the announcement, San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz was asked on [MSNBC's AM Joy](#) (10/29) if she supported a cancellation. Cruz said, "Yes, I called for that last week. There were too many questions. It was evident that this company did not have everything that was required to complete the mission that it has to do in Puerto Rico."

Also reporting are [NPR](#) (10/27, Wamsley), [The Hill](#) (10/27, Bowden), [The Hill](#) (10/28, Cama, Henry), and the [San Diego Union-Tribune](#) (10/27, Gomez).

Trump Administration Disavows Puerto Rico Power Contract. The [AP](#) (10/27, Biesecker, Daly) reports the Trump Administration "scrambled Friday to distance itself from the decision to award a \$300 million contract to help restore Puerto Rico's power grid to a tiny Montana company from Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's hometown," as White House press secretary Sarah Sanders "said federal officials played no role in the selection of Whitefish Energy Holdings by the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority." Sanders "said Zinke had given the president his personal assurance that he had nothing to do with what she described as 'a state and local decision made by the Puerto Rican authorities and not the federal government.'" The AP reports Zinke "also issued a fiery denial on Twitter, saying 'Only in elitist Washington, D.C., would being from a small town be considered a crime.'" In addition, [Reuters](#) (10/27, Heavey, Cowan, DiSavino) reports White House spokesman Raj Shah "said that the administration's 'understanding' was that the contract was awarded solely by PREPA, and they are 'not aware of any federal involvement' in the deal."

In the lead [ABC World News Tonight](#) (10/27, lead story, 3:05, Muir) story, chief White House correspondent Jonathan Karl reported that the two-year-old company has "just two employees, but clear political ties to the Trump Administration." Karl added that "before this, it's largest previous federal contract just over \$1 million, about 1/300th the size of the Puerto Rico deal." According to Karl, Whitefish Energy's "main financial backer, Dallas based HBC Investments, was founded by Joe Colonneta," who donated more than \$75,000 to Energy Secretary Perry's 2008 and 2012 campaigns as well as "nearly \$90,000 to support the Trump campaign and the RNC in 2016." However, an Energy Department spokesperson said the department "was not involved in the selection of Whitefish for this contract."

Meanwhile, the [New York Times](#) (10/27, Pérez-Peña) reports the Federal Emergency Management Agency "said on Friday that it had 'significant concerns'" about the Whitefish Energy contract and "warned that it might refuse to cover any costs if the contract between Whitefish Energy and the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority, known as Prepa, was found to be improper." The [Washington Post](#) (10/27, Davis) reports FEMA also "said in a statement that it is looking into whether the contract between Whitefish Energy and the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority, or PREPA, 'followed applicable regulations to ensure that federal money is properly spent.'" Ricardo Ramos, the Executive Director of Prepa, in an interview on Friday told the [Wall Street Journal](#) (10/27, Scurria) that provisions in the agreement claiming FEMA had approved the deal were a mistake caused by his rush to sign the deal. Ramos also expressed hope that the controversy would not drive the company to back out of the contract.

[Reuters](#) (10/27, Heavey) reports a spokesman for Whitefish Energy in an interview with MSNBC defended the company's contract as having been reached "in good faith with PREPA." He asserted the deal "speaks for itself" and added, "There's nothing there."

However, on the [CBS Evening News](#) (10/27, lead story, 2:25, Mason), correspondent David Begnaud reported San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulin Cruz "believes the deal with Whitefish Energy should be voided. She described the company as 'inadequate' and asked for transparency." Julianna Goldman reported in the second [CBS Evening News](#) (10/27, story 2, 1:55, Mason) segment that several lawmakers are demanding further investigations, and House Minority Leader Pelosi late Friday called for the contract "to be terminated immediately." Goldman added that the Department of Homeland Security's inspector general has agreed to conduct an

audit of the company's ties to lawmakers and government officials, "but there's one aspect of the deal that appears to be off limits. The contract says federal and state officials 'don't have the right to review the cost and profit elements of the labor rates.' Like \$462 per hour for a subcontractor site supervisor, and time and a half for anyone working over 40 hours."

Also reporting are the [Washington Times](#) (10/27, Boyer), [The Hill](#) (10/27, Fabian), [The Hill](#) (10/27, Cama), [Politico](#) (10/27, Lima, Lefebvre), the [Washington Examiner](#) (10/27, Siciliano), the [Washington Examiner](#) (10/27, Siegel), [Fox News](#) (10/27), and [Montana Public Radio](#) (10/27, Ouellet, Hegyi).

Whitefish Energy HQ Based Out Of Home Owned By CEO In Zinke's Hometown. On the [CBS Weekend News](#) (10/28, story 3, 2:00, Ninan), David Begnaud recounted visiting the headquarters of Whitefish Energy Holdings "in a remote, affluent area nestled in the mountains of northwestern Montana" that is also the hometown of Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke. Begnaud reported "the headquarters turns out to be a two-bedroom, two-bath house that's owned by" CEO Andy Techmanski, and "according to real estate record online, the house was up for sale, but it was taken off the market two days after Hurricane Maria made landfall in Puerto Rico." Begnaud said that since winning a \$300 million contract with Puerto Rico's power authority PREPA, Whitefish has grown from two employees to more than 300. He added that the [AP](#) has revealed "the Secretary's son at one time had a job with Whitefish Energy," although Zinke "is insisting he had absolutely nothing to do with" the contract.

Trump Plans To Shrink Two National Monuments In Utah.

The [New York Times](#) (10/27, Friedman) reports Sen. Orrin Hatch on Friday "said...that President Trump had told him the administration would shrink" Bears Ears National Monument, created by former President Obama, and the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, established by former President Clinton, based on the recommendation of Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke. White House press secretary Sarah Sanders "said a final report would be released 'shortly,'" but she "did not confirm whether the president has signed off on it in part or in whole." Sanders said, "I'm not going to get ahead of the president's announcement on the specifics of that, but I can tell you he will be going to Utah in the first part of early December and we will release more details at that point, if not before."

The [Washington Post](#) (10/27, Eilperin, Fears) reports "Trump did not specify exactly how he would change the boundaries, according to Hatch spokesman Matt Whitlock, though Interior Department officials have privately indicated that the administration plans to shrink it by hundreds of thousands of acres." Hatch said, "I was incredibly grateful the President called this morning to let us know that he is approving Secretary Zinke's recommendation on Bears Ears." Hatch added, "We believe in the importance of protecting these sacred antiquities, but Secretary Zinke and the Trump administration rolled up their sleeves to dig in, talk to locals, talk to local tribes, and find a better way to do it. We'll continue to work closely with them moving forward to ensure Utahns have a voice."

The [AP](#) (10/27, Daly) reports that "the Republican-led San Juan County, Utah commission welcomed Trump's action on Bears Ears." According to the article, "the three-member panel objected to the monument designation, saying it was too large and could hurt residents' ability to earn a living from livestock grazing."

The [AP](#) (10/28, Daly) adds that "environmental groups have promised to take the Trump administration to court to block any attempts to rescind or reduce the monument designations." [Reuters](#) (10/27, Flitter) reports that "the Navajo, who consider Bears Ears sacred ground, on Friday followed up their comment in September that they would sue the Trump administration for violating the Antiquities Act if it tried to reduce the monument's size." Ethel Branch, the Navajo Nation's attorney general, said, "The Navajo Nation stands ready to defend the Bears Ears National Monument. We have a complaint ready to file upon official action by the President."

Also reporting are [The Hill](#) (10/27, Henry), the [Wall Street Journal](#) (10/27, Carlton), the [Washington Post](#) (10/27, Eilperin, Fears), the [Washington Times](#) (10/27, Persons), the [Washington Examiner](#) (10/27, Siegel), the [Los Angeles Times](#) (10/27, Schneider), [Reuters](#) (10/27, Flitter), [CNN](#) (10/27, Merica), [Newsweek](#) (10/28, Kwong), the [Huffington Post](#) (10/28, Papenfuss), the [Independent \(UK\)](#) (10/27, York), [The Guardian \(UK\)](#) (10/27, Milman, Agencies), the [Salt Lake City Weekly](#) (10/27, Harris), [WEAR-TV Mobile \(AL\)](#) Mobile, AL (10/27, Mullahy), [KSTU-TV Salt Lake City](#) Salt Lake City (10/27, Edwards, Wells), and [KTVX-TV Salt Lake City](#) Salt Lake City (10/27, Mills).

Trump To Visit Utah Ahead Of Decision On Bears Ears Monument. The [Washington Examiner](#) (10/27, Morrongiello) reports that President Trump will "visit Utah in early December where he is

expected to shrink the size of two national monuments – Bears Ears and Grand Staircase – that were designated under previous administrations.” White House press secretary Sarah Sanders “announced the upcoming visit at a briefing on Friday, hours after Trump met with Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke to discuss his review of various monument designations.”

Additional coverage was provided by the [Salt Lake \(UT\) Tribune](#) (10/27, Burr, Maffly) and the [Deseret \(UT\) News](#) (10/27, O'Donoghue).

Under Trump, The Lines Are Drawn For A Battle Over Resources In The West.

The [Los Angeles Times](#) (10/27, Schneider) reports that “nearly a year after the 2016 election, a momentous 21st century confrontation is building over coal mining that is serving as a proxy for upcoming skirmishes over the West’s rural extractive economies.” According to the article, “the issue for both sides, as it was in the 1980s under the Reagan administration, is whether hard-rock mining, oil and gas, timber harvesting and irrigated agriculture will thrive or fade away.” Currently, “fossil fuel development commands the playing field.” The article notes that “in his first major policy speech, delivered in late September, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke laid out the contours of the administration’s perspective for an audience at the Heritage Foundation.” Zinke said, “This administration, the president, believes in American energy dominance. Our goal is an America that is the strongest energy superpower this world has ever known. I can assure you today that the war on American energy is over.”

Interior Department Kickstarts Initiative To Get Veterans Back Into America’s Wild.

[Breitbart](#) (10/27, Wong) reports that the Interior Department on Thursday welcomed “a gathering of veterans, hunting, and wildlife groups” for a “meeting to discuss how to improve access for hunting and fishing for veterans, particularly wounded warriors and those with PTSD.” Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke “hosted the gathering to kickstart the initiative, one of his big priorities at the department.” Addressing the group, Zinke said, “Our veterans are spending more time overseas than they are at home. And it has an effect on the VA. It has an effect on communities because normal has become over there, rather than over here, so I’m concerned about the experience when they come home that our public lands are once again returned to the people.” Zinke continued, “Hunting and fishing is part of our legacy. And a lot of veterans are part of our hunting and fishing experience, and I am concerned that we’ve seen a lack of access, roads being closed, the wilderness, even.”

Key Obama-Era Leasing Reform To Get The Ax.

[E&E Publishing](#) (10/27, Streater) reported the Interior Department is working to eliminate master leasing plans, “a key Obama-era leasing reform strategy designed to guide oil and natural gas development away from areas with high natural and cultural resource values.” MLPs allowed the Bureau of Land Management to prevent energy development around national parks and other environmentally sensitive areas. Interior argues that removing MLPs will streamline the regulatory process for energy development on public lands, which instead will be guided by individual resource management plans. While MLP proponents say they offer certainty for the energy industry on where new oil and gas and mining activity is suitable, “reducing challenges to leases,” the industry complained that MLPs “restrict access to valuable domestic energy resources.”

Energy Dominance Meets Market Realities.

[Politico Morning Energy](#) (10/27, Adragna) reports that the Interior Department “plans to offer 10 million onshore acres in the National Petroleum Reserve in northern Alaska in December and 77 million offshore acres across the entire Gulf of Mexico in March, but the combination of low oil prices and ample private land available for fracking may keep some away.” Ken Medlock, director of the Baker Institute’s Center for Energy Studies at Rice University in Houston, said, “It’s almost like having a fire sale of all the acreage. Wouldn’t surprise me at all if there’s a lot of acreage that doesn’t sell.”

Ryan Zinke: Cowboy In Trump’s Cabinet Taking Aim At America’s Public Lands.

[The Guardian \(UK\)](#) (10/27, McLaughlin, Montana) reports that Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke “meticulously crafts his image as wilderness-loving western cowboy and sportsman.” However, “nine months into his job at the Department of the Interior, the federal agency that oversees most public lands and natural resources, the act is wearing thin with environmentalists and outdoors enthusiasts who say his early moves demonstrate strong allegiance to the oil, gas and

other extractive industries seeking access to some of America's most spectacular protected landscapes." Land Tawney, president of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, said, "He sold himself as a Theodore Roosevelt Republican. That means wise use. More and more sportsmen are waking up to what's going on."

Additional commentary appeared in the [Charleston \(WV\) Gazette-Mail](#) (10/28, McCoy).

Turkish Touch On Los Angeles.

The [Daily Sabah \(TUR\)](#) (10/28, Sayiner) reports that "the first Hollywood Turkish Film Festival was held on Oct. 20-22." Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke "participated in the festival where famous Turkish actors and actresses, including Demet Akbag, Selçuk Yöntem and Meryem Üzerli, were also in attendance."

Western Senators Urge Longer Sage Grouse Comment Period.

[KTVZ-TV](#) Bend, OR (10/27) reports that "Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, along with their Western Democratic colleagues, on Friday urged Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke to extend the comment period by 45 days for changes to the Greater Sage-grouse conservation plans." The letter from seven Western senators "responds to the Trump administration publishing a Notice of Intent earlier this month to amend Greater Sage-grouse conservation plans with only a 45-day comment period, closing on November 27." They wrote, "Given the importance and complexity of the proposed rule, and the intersection with BLM's resource management plans, it is essential that all stakeholders have sufficient opportunity to prepare and provide feedback."

Trump Administration's Costly One-Two Punch For Taxpayers.

In an op-ed for [The Hill](#) (10/29, Jenkins), David Jenkins, the president of Conservatives for Responsible Stewardship, criticizes the "policy rollbacks" Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt are "pursuing at the behest of special interests." Jenkins points to the rules "designed to limit the waste of taxpayer-owned natural gas, increase royalty revenue and reduce air pollution." He argues "these common-sense standards were designed to help cut the approximately \$2 billion worth of natural gas (primarily made up of methane) currently wasted by the oil and gas industry every year." Jenkins urges the Trump Administration to "halt efforts to roll back methane waste rules designed to protect taxpayers and their resources."

Guest Opinion: Don't Drill Beside TR's National Park.

In an op-ed for the [Billings \(MT\) Gazette](#) (10/27, O'Neill), Jayson O'Neill, deputy director of the Western Values Project, claims that Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke is "set on opening up any and all of our public lands to special interests, including a pending oil and gas lease proposal that borders Theodore Roosevelt National Park, which was created to honor and protect Roosevelt's former ranch and conservation legacy." O'Neill argues that "through this effort they are getting rid of common-sense rules that protect our national parks, wildlife habitat, and outdoor recreation opportunities from the very industrial exploitation that Roosevelt warned us of." He writes that "if Zinke wants to honor Roosevelt's legacy, he should not continue to give our national park and monument landscapes away to special interests."

It's Congress' Turn To Fight Wildfires.

In an op-ed for [The Hill](#) (10/28, HumphriesOpinion Contributor —), Rebecca Humphries, CEO of the National Wild Turkey Federation, urges Congress "to implement long-needed changes to laws regulating national forest management and end the erosion of the Forest Service's budget for proactive forest work." She argues that "active forest management and forest restoration can significantly diminish the severity of damage caused by fire." But to do so, agencies "need adequate funding to effectively manage these lands."

Don't Let Congress Hand Arctic Refuge To Big Oil And Gas.

Natural Resources Defense Council President Rhea Suh, in an op-ed in the [Seattle Times](#) (10/27, Suh), criticized GOP leaders in Congress as having "stooped to backdoor budget chicanery to try and raid the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge" in "a shameful betrayal of the public interest" that must be defeated. Other provisions would open to drilling "federal waters in the Arctic Ocean, the eastern Gulf of Mexico and up and down the Atlantic seaboard, irreplaceable marine and coastal habitat that have been protected from the oil and gas industry." Suh calls for the public "to stand up and demand that Congress strip these pernicious provisions out of the final budget language

that both houses agree to and make sure they do no more damage."

Bureau Of Indian Affairs

Deadline Near For Tribal Members To Claim Settlement Money.

The [AP](#) (10/27) reports that "American Indian tribal members and their descendants have until Nov. 27 to ask for their share of the remainder of \$3.4 billion in settlement money awarded to Native Americans after a major class-action lawsuit against the federal government." U.S. District of Columbia District Court Judge Thomas Hogan set the deadline in a January order, "after it was apparent that efforts to find tribe members to entitled to the award money listed as 'whereabouts unknown' were no longer as successful." According to the article, "unclaimed funds that remain after the deadline passes will be added to the Cobell Educational Scholarship Fund."

Additional coverage was provided by the [Billings \(MT\) Gazette](#) (10/27, Wilson).

Tribal Leaders Call Land-Use Bill Step In Right Direction.

The [AP](#) (10/29, Windes) reports that "tribal leaders backed a House bill Wednesday that would give tribes the ability to control more of their land, instead of having to get federal approval for virtually any use." The American Indian Empowerment Act would "let tribes shift federally controlled trust land to 'restricted fee land,' a move that could save millions of dollars that tribes now spend on 'burdensome regulation,' while restoring a level of tribal sovereignty." The article adds that "while they called the bill a step in the right direction, however, witnesses said they are concerned about ambiguities in the thin, three-page bill that 'could allow state or local governments to implement property taxes on tribal land,' among other issues."

Tribal Leaders Received Payments In Failed Brokerage Deal.

The [Sioux Falls \(SD\) Argus Leader](#) (10/27, Ellis) reports that Lower Brule Tribal Council members were "among those who received payments from a taxpayer guaranteed loan that was used to buy a failing Wall Street brokerage firm." However, "the payments to tribal members were not illegal and simply part of doing business in Indian Country." Those are among the conclusions of an investigation by the Interior Department "into the tribe's purchase of Westrock Group, a brokerage that went bankrupt shortly after the Lower Brule tribe bought it."

Bureau Of Land Management

CBS: Wild Horse Protection.

The [CBS Weekend News](#) (10/29, story 8, 2:25, Quijano) reported, "President Trump's proposed budget has ignited a battle in the wild west between the livestock industry and animal rights activists. It's a dispute over grazing territory. Tens of thousands of wild horses could end up being slaughtered."

State, BLM Work Together On Land Exchange.

The [Taos \(NM\) News](#) (10/28) reports that New Mexico State Land Commissioner Aubrey Dunn and Acting Bureau of Land Management New Mexico State Director Aden Seidlitz signed a proclamation Friday (Oct. 27), agreeing to work together on a land exchange that will consolidate state and federal holdings within the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument and the Sabinoso Wilderness Area." The Interior Department is "expected to transfer 43,000 acres of state-owned surface and mineral estate within the monument and the wilderness area to the BLM in exchange for giving the state 78,000 federal acres in several counties including Chaves, Colfax, Guadalupe, Lincoln, McKinley, Mora, Otero, Rio Arriba, San Juan, Sandoval, Santa Fe, Socorro and Torrance Counties."

Plan Keeps Most Of Sonoran Desert Monument Open To Shooters.

The [AP](#) (10/28, VERNILE) reports that the Bureau of Land Management has "recommended closing 53,300 acres of the Sonoran Desert National Monument to recreational shooting, but keeping the remaining 443,000 open to shooters." The plan, "posted Oct. 20 in the Federal Register, calls for making 11 percent of the monument's land off-limits to shooting." The article notes that "hunting is not affected by any of the proposals considered by the bureau, and would be allowed anywhere in the monument with the proper permits."

Bundey, Sons Finally Get Their Day (more Likely Months) In Court For Armed 2014 Standoff.

[KSNV-TV](#) Las Vegas (10/29, Clemons) reports from Las Vegas that “Bunkerville rancher Cliven Bundy and two of his sons – Ryan and Ammon along with independent militia leader Ryan Payne – will appear in federal court at 8:30 a.m.” this morning “as jury selection begins in a long-awaited trial.” The four “have been in a federal detention for nearly two years, awaiting earlier trials of others connected to the confrontation,” and “they face potential decades in prison if convicted of conspiracy and other charges related to the 2014 incident.” KSNV-TV adds that in April 2014, “Bundy and his supporters had a week of confrontations with Bureau of Land Management Rangers and contractors hired by the government to confiscate nearly 1,000 head of his cattle grazing in the Gold Butte area.” Two previous trials of other defendants “ended with several acquittals and just a pair of convictions, leading three defendants to cut plea deals with prosecutors on much lesser charges.”

Additional coverage was provided by the [Las Vegas Review-Journal](#) (10/28, Ferrara, Lochhead).

Bureau Of Ocean Energy Management

Air Gun Oil Exploration Might Blast Rare Whale Out Of The Gulf.

The [New Orleans Times-Picayune](#) (10/27, Baurick) reported the Center for Biological Diversity is petitioning to have the Gulf of Mexico’s population of Cuvier’s beaked whales listed under the Endangered Species Act, warning that seismic air gun testing could deafen or kill the remaining numbers. The whale is the deepest diving mammal, and has already struggled because of the Gulf’s oil industry, according to Abel Caldiva, a biologist with the center. Endangered status could lead to the northern Gulf being designated a critical habitat, and lead to the development of a federal recovery plan for the whale.

Bureau Of Reclamation

Idaho Approves \$3 Million To Study Raising Boise River Dams.

The [AP](#) (10/28) reports that “Idaho officials have approved spending \$3 million to help pay for a federal study to increase the height of three dams on the Boise River.” The Idaho Water Resources Board on Tuesday “approved paying for half of the \$6 million study that requires a 50 percent non-federal match.” The Bureau of Reclamation study will “look at raising Anderson Ranch Dam by 6 feet, Arrowrock Dam by 10 feet and Lucky Peak Dam by 4 feet.”

Additional coverage was provided by the [Salem \(OR\) Capital Press](#) (10/27, Ellis).

Bureau Of Safety And Environmental Enforcement

How A 672,000-Gallon Oil Spill Was Nearly Invisible.

The [New York Times](#) (10/29, Caron) reports that when an oil pipeline owned by LLOG Exploration, lying about a mile below the surface of the Gulf of Mexico, fractured in early October, about 672,000 gallons of oil escaped, in what appears “to be the largest since the Deepwater Horizon explosion in 2010.” However, “hardly any of it was visible” on the surface, as “the oil seemed to have completely disappeared.” The oil, under high pressure and seeping through a small fracture, escaped in droplets measured in microns, according to Lt. Cmdr. Steven Youde of the Coast Guard. Much of the oil was eaten by oil-degrading bacteria, with larger droplets that rose to the surface broken down by “sunlight, wind and wave action.”

Fish And Wildlife Service

Forensics Lab Solves Crimes Against Animals.

[CNN](#) (10/29) provided a look at the United States Fish and Wildlife Service Forensics Laboratory, “the only lab in the world devoted entirely to investigating crimes against animals.” According to the article, “located in Ashland, Oregon, this state-of-the-art facility boasts a pathology department, an on-site forensic ornithologist and a genetics team to investigate illegal animal

killings, smuggling and other crimes.”

Wildlife Refuge In New England Set For Major Expansion.

The [AP](#) (10/29, Casey) reports that “a plan to significantly expand a wildlife refuge that covers parts of the Connecticut River watershed in New England is running into opposition from the timber industry and governors in several states.” The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service “earlier this year released a 15-year conservation plan for the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge, which covers more than 37,000 acres in Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Connecticut.” The agency “identified 197,000 acres that could be added to the refuge either through purchases or other agreements with land owners or nonprofits.”

First Whooping Cranes Sighted At Wildlife Refuge.

The [Victoria \(TX\) Advocate](#) (10/27, Priest) reports that “whooping cranes are back on the Texas Coast, about two months after Hurricane Harvey changed their wintering grounds.” Wade Harrell, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services’ whooping crane recovery coordinator, said Friday, “Two groups of two were spotted at different times and at different locations. I think the first group was on Wednesday and the second group was on Thursday. They were adults, and that’s pretty typical. The family groups or the pairs with juveniles are usually the last to arrive.” Harrell said the whooping cranes were seen on Blackjack Peninsula at the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge.

National Park Service

Lawmakers: High User Fees Could Hurt Acadia, National Parks.

The [AP](#) (10/27) reports that “Maine’s congressional delegation is turning a critical eye on a U.S. Department of the Interior proposal to raise fees at national parks, including Acadia National Park.” Sens. Susan Collins and Angus King “sent a letter to the department after an announcement that it’s proposing increasing fees at 17 national parks. The peak season increases would help offset overdue maintenance costs.” They “say the department should consider creating a National Park Service Legacy Restoration Fund or Conservation Service Corp to help address the backlog.”



The [AP](#) (10/27) reports that Washington Gov. Jay Inslee “says that a National Park Service plan to impose steep increases in entrance fees at 17 of its most popular parks would hurt rural counties in Washington state.” In a letter sent to Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke Thursday, Inslee “says the increase would likely decrease the number of visitors to the parks, and that the cost would put the parks out of reach to lower and middle income families.”

Also reporting are the [Daily World \(WA\)](#) (10/28), the [Daily Inter Lake \(MT\)](#) (10/28, Frissell, Reilly), the [Bangor \(ME\) Daily News](#) (10/27, Sambides), the [Sacramento \(CA\) Bee](#) (10/27, Kasler), and [KCNC-TV Denver](#) Denver (10/27, Boyd).

Commentary in the [Los Angeles Times](#) (10/27, Board), the [Denver Post](#) (10/27), the [New Republic](#) (10/27, Atkin), and the [Canandaigua \(NY\) Daily Messenger](#) (10/29, Lisenbee) criticized the proposal, while the [Chicago Tribune](#) (10/27, Board) supported it in an editorial.

Trump Celebrates Halloween Early With Journalists’ Children.

The [New York Times](#) (10/27, Flegenheimer) reports that “for some 180 seconds on Friday,” the “Halloween-costumed” children of White House reporters “inspired a quintessential Trump performance – part executive gripe session, part grandfatherly charm, part open-mic night for the under-12 set.”

Although the [CBS Evening News](#)  (10/27, story 12, 0:25, Mason) in a brief report acknowledged “Trump observed a truce with reporters...long enough to invite their kids into the Oval Office for an early Halloween celebration,” [ABC World News Tonight](#)  (10/27, story 10, 0:40, Muir) broadcast the President asking, “So how does the press treat you?” He continued, “I’ll bet you get treated better by the press than anybody in the world, right? Huh? I think so. Hi, sweetie. Well, congratulations, folks. You did a good job.” Trump added, “You did a good job. Here you did a good job. I wouldn’t say you did very well here. But really beautiful children.”

The [AP](#) (10/27) reports that “the president will also be welcoming ghost[s] and goblins to the South Lawn for trick-or-treating on the eve of Halloween on Monday.” The AP adds that “federal agencies including NASA, the Secret Service and the National Park Service also will be handing out giveaways.”

Additional coverage was provided by [ABC News](#) (10/29, Caplan).

Too Many Tourists: Crowding Is A Big Headache At National Parks And Theme Parks.

The [Los Angeles Times](#) (10/28, Martin) reports that “across the country, people have been trekking to national parks, theme parks and other tourist attractions in record numbers during the past few years, creating an unexpected problem for the tourism industry: too many customers.” Without a solution, managers “fear that long lines and unruly crowds ultimately will turn off future visitors.”

Additional coverage was provided by the [Sacramento \(CA\) Bee](#) (10/27, Reese).

Parks Service Denies Permit For Giant Statue Of Naked Woman On National Mall.

[CNN](#) (10/27, Tatum) reports that “the group behind an effort to bring a 45-foot-tall sculpture of a naked woman to the National Mall says it is ‘looking to formalize litigation’ after the National Park Service denied approval of the statue.” Natalie White, spokeswoman for Catharsis on the Mall, said in a statement, “We need a law firm willing to take on overly restrictive NPS rules that inappropriately seem to value the preservation of the perceived aesthetic of the National Mall over First Amendment activities. Historical use of this public space includes free-speech demonstrations that continue to shape the character of our country.”

Also reporting are [Newsweek](#) (10/27, Solis).

Feds Pull Funding For Black Panther Legacy Project In Berkeley After Backlash.

The [Washington Examiner](#) (10/29, Lim) reports that “a Black Panther Party legacy project at the University of California Berkeley will no longer proceed after the National Park Service bowed to pressure applied by conservative organizations and pulled federal funding, according to a report.” The National Park Service “announced in September it would award \$98,000 to Ula Taylor, UC Berkeley’s incoming African-American studies chairwoman,” for the Black Panther Party Research, Interpretation & Memory Project. Spokesman Craig Dalby said, “After an additional review of the project, the [National Park Service] decided not to move forward with funding the project.”

Also reporting are the [San Francisco Chronicle](#) (10/27, Robertson) and the [East Bay \(CA\) Times](#) (10/27, Drummond).

Light Pollution Is Stealing Your View Of The Stars.

National Parks Want To Give It Back. The [Denver Post](#) (10/29, Finley) reports that managers at national parks are “trying to set themselves up as preserves by obtaining official ‘dark sky’ designations.” Karen Treviño, chief of National Park Service’s Natural Sounds and Night Skies Division, said, “On one hand, it would be an honor to be able to provide the American public with an experience they are seeking, particularly if they cannot get that anywhere else. That’s partly why national parks were established. On the other, it’s kind of sad to think we might get to a point one day where national parks are the only places where Americans could have that type of experience.”

Culture Of Harassment At NPS ‘Completely Unacceptable’.

The [Rafu Shimpo \(CA\)](#) (10/26) reports that Sen. Mazie Hirono, ranking member of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, “on Oct. 13 called for action to be taken following the release of a National Park Service (NPS) survey that found that 38 percent of NPS employees have been harassed or discriminated against in the past year.” The Interior Department “announced that NPS will receive additional resources to address complaints and expand training.” Hirono said, “Today’s announcement confirms what we’ve known for some time – there is a pervasive culture of workplace harassment in the National Park Service. Continued silence and inaction are completely unacceptable. Working together, we can provide the necessary oversight and resources to ensure that all NPS employees – regardless of age, race, gender, and sexual orientation – have a safe working environment.”

Additional coverage of the issue was provided by the [Washington Post](#) (10/27, Davidson).

Marin Resident To Head Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

The [Marin \(CA\) Independent Journal](#) (10/27, Prado) reports that Laura Joss, regional director for the National Park Service’s Pacific West Region, will become the next superintendent of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area in November. Joss said, “It’s been a dream job for years. I’m so happy and amazed that this opportunity came about.”

Once-thriving Thurmond, W.Va., Is Now A Coal-country Ghost Town.

[USA Today](#) (10/27) reports on Thurmond, “a ghost town whose fortunes rose and fell with the

coal industry." According to the article, "much of the once-bustling town of 500 is now owned by the National Park Service's New River Gorge National River."

Additional coverage was provided by [USA Today](#) (10/27, Bordsen).

Office Of Surface Mining

Fourpole Creek Watershed Association Honored For Work Protecting Local Waterway.

The [Huntington \(WV\) Herald-Dispatch](#) (10/28) reports that "watershed volunteers were recognized for their tireless efforts of working for clean water in WV for the 19th year at Watershed Celebration Day an event hosted by Friends of the Cheat and the WV Watershed Network earlier this year." According to the article, "volunteers took part in tours of the Cheat River watershed as they floated down the river to learn the positive impact of tourism or hiked into the mountains to see how volunteers can plan, fund, and implement remedial projects that treat acid mine drainage." Rick Buckley, with the Office of Surface Mining, "an original partner helping FOC clean up pollution from old coal mine drainage in the Cheat Watershed," said, "The Friends of the Cheat (FOC) has been in existence for 23 years and are both locally and nationally recognized for their leadership role and determination to restore, preserve, and promote the outstanding natural qualities of the Cheat Watershed. It is exciting for us to have them host other volunteers and demonstrate the keys to their many successes."

US Geological Survey

Proposed Name Change For Confederate Corners Subject Of Monterey County Online Survey.

The [San Jose \(CA\) Mercury News](#) (10/27, Johnson) reports that "seeking community input on possible renaming of the little known "Confederate Corners" intersection, Supervisor Jane Parker and Monterey County staff have released an online survey allowing the public to weigh in." The survey says "that the Board of Supervisors has been asked by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names to make a recommendation about how to handle the Confederate Corners name, which the U.S. Geological Survey uses to designate the intersection of Monterey-Salinas Highway and Hitchcock Road where former Confederate soldiers settled after the Civil War." The survey, "which will accept responses until Nov. 8, asks respondents to decide between four main options: Take no action and allow the USGS to make a decision about the name; ask the USGS to remove the name 'Confederate Corners' and leave this as an unnamed location; ask the USGS to change the name; and 'Other.'"

Additional Reading.

- *Armageddon Via Imaginary Planet Has Been Pushed Back — Yet Again — To November.* [Washington Post](#) (10/28, Selk).
- *New USGS Map Shows Where Hurricane Maria Triggered Landslides On Puerto Rico.* [Weather Channel](#) (10/27, Breslin).
- *After The Napa Fires, A Disaster-in-Waiting: Toxic Ash.* [Wired](#) (10/29, Rogers).
- *100-year Floods Prompt Drone Visit At Historic Site.* [Gillette \(WY\) News Record](#) (10/28, Albers).
- *Alaska's Glaciers Are Shrinking Fast.* [KPAX-TV](#) Missoula, MT (10/27, Gillette).
- *Pacific Sees Preview Of Flood Inundation Map.* [Missourian](#) (10/27, Masson).
- *Thousands Of Monarch Butterflies Could Be Stranded.* [New York Post](#) (10/27).
- *Toxic Ash, Debris From California Wildfires Pose Risks During Cleanup.* [CNN](#) (10/28, Wotus, Gray).
- *Volcano Watch: USGS Maps Identify Lava Inundation Zones For Mauna Loa.* [Hawaii Tribune-Herald](#) (10/29).
- *When Will The Yellowstone Supervolcano Erupt?.* [Forbes](#) (10/27) .

Top National News

Trump Blasts Mueller Probe Amid Reports That Charges Could Be Announced Today.

In the wake of reports that a grand jury has approved the first charges in special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election, the President took to Twitter Sunday to criticize the investigation, Hillary Clinton and congressional Democrats. Trump's tweets and speculation about who is targeted by the indictment garner heavy media coverage – leading two of the three network news broadcasts – and were the subject of a great deal of discussion on the Sunday talk shows. Trump is generally cast as lashing out at the investigation and seeking to shift attention to possible connections between members of the Clinton campaign and Russia.

Trump [tweeted](#), “All of this ‘Russia’ talk right when the Republicans are making their big push for historic Tax Cuts & Reform. Is this coincidental? NOT!” In a series of earlier tweets ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#)) Trump wrote, “Never seen such Republican ANGER & UNITY as I have concerning the lack of investigation on Clinton made Fake Dossier (now \$12,000,000?),....the Uranium to Russia deal, the 33,000 plus deleted Emails, the Comey fix and so much more. Instead they look at phony Trump/Russia,.....‘collusion,’ which doesn’t exist. The Dems are using this terrible (and bad for our country) Witch Hunt for evil politics, but the R’s...are now fighting back like never before. There is so much GUILT by Democrats/Clinton, and now the facts are pouring out. DO SOMETHING!”

The [AP](#) (10/29) says Trump “is unleashing new criticism of the investigations into possible ties between his campaign associates and Russia.” The [Los Angeles Times](#) (10/29, Willman) says that in “an angry series of tweets,” Trump “sought to blame partisan politics for the widening scandal,” and the [Washington Post](#) (10/29, Johnson) reports that in the “four tweets sent over 24 minutes,” Trump “expressed frustration that his campaign is under investigation over possible ties to Russia’s plot to influence the 2016 election but that his former opponent Hillary Clinton is not facing the same level of scrutiny.” In the lead story for The [CBS Weekend News](#) (10/29, lead story, 2:15), Eliane Quijano said Trump in “a hail of tweets...shrugged off the looming charges, suggesting in capital letters that the spotlight be turned instead towards Hillary Clinton.” [USA Today](#) (10/29, Wolf) reports that Trump “appeared ready for the other shoe to drop, taking to Twitter on Sunday to denounce the investigation, Democrats and his election opponent, Hillary Clinton.” To the [New York Times](#) (10/29, Davis), Trump was seeking “to shift the focus to a litany of accusations against” Clinton “a day before the special counsel inquiry will reportedly produce its first indictment in the case.” Similarly, the [Washington Examiner](#) (10/29, Feldscher) says Trump responded to reports that indictments are about to be announced “by pointing the finger at Democrats.”

Kate Snow reported in the lead story for [NBC Nightly News](#) (10/29, lead story, 2:30) that Trump “bemoaned all the Russia talk,” and Kelly O’Donnell said he “vent[ed] broadly about the Russia investigation.” [Politico](#) (10/29, Griffiths) says Trump “expanded on his long-simmering disdain for the investigation,” while [The Hill](#) (10/29, Samuels) describes Trump as lashing out and says his “outrage” was “apparently prompted by a Washington Post report earlier this week that a lawyer working for Clinton’s campaign and the Democratic National Committee (DNC) helped fund” the so-called Trump Dossier.

A [New York Post](#) (10/29, Moore) headline, meanwhile, describes a “Twitter meltdown” by Trump. The Post reports that Trump’s “twitter explosion comes as CNN reported” that Mueller “is expected to announce his first indictments in the case as soon as Monday.” However, [Bloomberg News](#) (10/29, Levin) reports that special White House counsel Ty Cobb said news of the pending charges did not trigger Trump’s tweets. Cobb said in an emailed statement, “Contrary to what many have suggested, the president’s comments today are unrelated to the activities of the special counsel, with whom he continues to cooperate.” The [Washington Examiner](#) (10/29, Lim) reports that Cobb told the New York Times on Saturday that Trump “has no concerns” about “any impact” of conversations between Mueller, Manafort or Flynn. Cobb said, “I think he would be sad for them, as a friend and a former colleague, if the process results in punishment or indictments. ... But to the extent that that happens, that’s beyond [Trump’s] control.” The [Washington Times](#) (10/29, Sherfinski) and the [Daily Caller](#) (10/29, Donachie) also report on Trump’s tweets.

[Politico](#) (10/29, Nussbaum) says the expected indictment leaves Trump “facing a politically perilous week as his White House juggles unveiling significant tax legislation, announcing its pick for Federal Reserve chair and launching a 12-day-long foreign trip.” According to Politico, “the expected indictment...could make Monday one of the most politically consequential days of this presidency.” Politico cites “a senior White House official and a top GOP Capitol Hill aide” who said that House Republicans “still plan to release a draft of their tax bill this week.” Presidential counselor Kellyanne Conway “said the White House could keep its policy aims front and center this week,” telling Politico, “We know there is a complete disconnect between what Americans are told matters to them and what they tell us matters to them.”

Indictment Could Be Unsealed Today; Schiff Says Manafort Or Flynn Could Be The Targets.

[Reuters](#) (10/29, Hosenball) cites "a source briefed on the matter" who said a Federal grand jury approved charges on Friday. While the indictment "was sealed under orders from a federal judge so it was not clear what the charges were or who the target was," the source said it could be unsealed as early as Monday. David Wright reported on [ABC World News Tonight](#) (10/29, story 2, 3:10, Llamas) that "sources tell ABC News the grand jury has approved charges." Wright added that there is "no shortage of possible members of Trump's inner circle who have faced questions about their dealings with Russians. Or there could be others we haven't heard of before." Wright said that while the "two key targets so far" are former Trump campaign manager Paul Manafort and former National Security Adviser Michael Flynn, "Manafort's team says they don't think an indictment is coming their way. Flynn's team hasn't responded." Also in the lead story for [NBC Nightly News](#) (10/29, lead story, 2:30), O'Donnell said that "Manafort and Flynn deny any wrong doing and others who've received less public attention could be in jeopardy."

Paula Reid reported in the lead story for The [CBS Weekend News](#) (10/29, lead story, 2:15) that because "the threat of an indictment can certainly provide an incentive to cooperate with investigators," if the person "who is expected to be charged suddenly decides to work with the special counsel, it is possible that the charges could remain under seal, and we won't see any arrests this week."

Rep. Adam Schiff, ranking Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, said on [MSNBC AM Joy](#) (10/29), "I don't know who was indicted. We certainly do know Manafort has at least told people that he believed that he would be indicted. It could be Manafort. It could be Flynn. Many people have been pointing out that you generally go after the small fish first. Those are not small fish. We are talking about the National Security Adviser for the President and we are talking about the President's campaign manager. If those are the small fish then the big fish has got to be pretty big." Schiff said on [ABC's This Week with George Stephanopoulos](#) (10/29), that if it is Manafort, "it may help us answer one very central question in the investigation. That is, we know that the Russian government, through intermediaries, was reaching out to the Trump campaign, reaching out to Paul Manafort and others. ... We also know from the Washington Post reporting that contemporaneously to that, Paul Manafort is reaching out in the other direction...offering information in exchange for money. ... The question is, who gave what to whom, as a result of these overtures?"

Francesca Chambers of DailyMail.com said on [Fox News MediaBuzz](#) (10/29), "One thing I can tell you is the White House received no indication that it is someone who works at the White House currently, Jared Kushner or someone who would be close to the President like Don, Jr." Julie Pace of the Associated Press said on [CNN Inside Politics](#) (10/29), "One thing that is certain no matter what happens tomorrow, this undermines the message that the White House has been trying to push, which is essentially that the Mueller investigation is turning up nothing and is close to ending. That is simply factually inaccurate." Similarly, Perry Bacon of FiveThirtyEight said on [CNN Inside Politics](#) (10/29), "Sarah Sanders, I assume, cannot say the investigation is ending tomorrow after an indictment comes out. So I'll be curious to see what the tweets are like, if they back off." Bacon added, "What do the members say? There's always this idea out there that maybe Trump will fire Mueller. I'll be curious if the members sort of at this point say, you cannot, cannot do that or we will do something else."

"Face the Nation" host John Dickerson was asked on The [CBS Weekend News](#) (10/29, story 2, 1:50, Quijano) about the political significance of an indictment. Dickerson said, "It depends who the indictment is aimed at and if it is a minor character on the fringe of this story, it won't mean very much. In fact, you can imagine, and now we're really getting into the ether, here, of speculation. But if it's a sideline figure that is not related to the President, it is possible to imagine that the President would take some heart from that and say it approves this is a witch hunt. On the other hand, if it is somebody very close to the Trump campaign, then it would require all kinds of responses both from the President and his team, that would create more volatility."

BuzzFeed: FBI Probe Focusing On 13 Wire Transfers By Companies Linked To Manafort.

[BuzzFeed](#) (10/29, Leopold, Cormier) reports that the FBI's investigation of Manafort "includes a keen focus on a series of suspicious wire transfers in which offshore companies linked to Manafort moved more than \$3 million all over the globe between 2012 and 2013. Much of the money came into the United States." BuzzFeed News "has learned that investigators have been scrutinizing at least 13 wire transfers between 2012 and 2013." Citing the BuzzFeed report, the [Daily Caller](#) (10/29, White) says the wire transfers "drew the attention of federal law enforcement officials who were examining if he was helping the Ukrainian regime launder millions it plundered through

corrupt dealings."

Gowdy: Mueller Should Put A Stop To Leaks. In appearance on [Fox News Sunday](#) (10/29, Wallace), House Oversight Committee Chairman Trey Gowdy called on Mueller to crack down on leaks, [Politico](#) (10/29, Guida) reports. Gowdy said, "The only conversation I've had with Robert Mueller, it was stressing to him the importance of cutting out the leaks with respect to serious investigations." He added, "It is kind of ironic that the people in charge of investigating the law and executing the law would violate the law. ... Make no mistake, disclosing grand jury material is a violation of the law. So, as a former prosecutor, I'm disappointed that you and I are having the conversation because somebody violated their oath of secrecy." Gowdy also "said he's not pushing for Mueller's investigation to be curtailed or shut down." [Townhall](#) (10/29, Meads) says Gowdy "lambasted Democrats, leaks stemming from special counsel Robert Mueller's Investigation, and President Trump's Department of Justice" during the Fox interview.

Christie: Disclosure Of Grand Jury Indictments Could Be A Criminal Violation. The [Washington Examiner](#) (10/29, Giaritelli) reports that New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie told [ABC's This Week with George Stephanopoulos](#) the person who told CNN that the grand jury will issue indictments this week may have committed a crime. Christie said, "We don't know who leaked it to CNN. It would be a crime if prosecutors or agents leaked it. If defense lawyers leaked it, it might be less. ... It's supposed to be kept secret." Christie said on [CNN's State Of The Union](#) (10/29, Tapper) that "there are very, very strict laws on grand jury secrecy. So depending upon who leaked this to CNN, that's a criminal violation, potentially." Similarly, Christie told [CBS' Face The Nation](#) (10/29, Dickerson) that "there are strict laws against any of this type of leaking of grand jury activity and so the idea that we may know, in fact that there is been some activity done already depending upon who leaked that information, that could be criminal violation as well."

Waters Sees Sufficient Grounds To Discuss Impeachment. Rep. Maxine Waters said on [MSNBC AM Joy](#) (10/29), "I have faith in our special counsel. Mueller is doing a good job. As a matter of fact, he's going to be bringing some indictments next week. We don't know who they are. It could be Manafort, it could be Flynn, it could be Carter page, I don't know, but I think that if a reasonable person takes a look at all of the connections with Russia, the fact that this President has said that he wanted to lift sanctions, the fact that we pass law that said – strengthened those sanctions against Russia and he has not implemented the law that we passed, he won't say a negative word about Putin, there's enough there for responsible, reasonable members of Congress to talk about impeachment."

Portman: Americans Should Be Focused On Russian Meddling. Sen. Rob Portman was asked on [NBC's Meet the Press](#) (10/29, Todd) if he is concerned the President may issue pardons or fire Mueller. Portman said, "I hope Congress will encourage that the Senate Intelligence Committee, which I think is doing a great job, bipartisan with Senator Warner, Senator Burr, complete their work and that we support this investigation that the Department of Justice has now appointed this special prosecutor. Let's let him get to the bottom of it. As you know, I've been involved in this issue quite a while in terms of the disinformation the Russians are doing, in terms of their meddling and every American, Republican and Democrat alike, should be focused on that."

Gowdy, King Question Uranium One Deal. Gowdy was also asked on [Fox News Sunday](#) (10/29, Wallace), about the Uranium One investigation. Gowdy said that "we've spent most of 2017 trying to better understand what Russia did to this country in 2016. Not to the Democrats, not to the Republicans but to the country. So, what we know is that Russia was not our friend in 2016. It is not that big of a leap to ask if they were our friends in 2010. That is not that big of a leap. It was not Republicans who gave the reset button to Russia. It was not Republicans who said we will have more flexibility in a second term. It was a Republican named Mitt Romney that said Russia was our greatest threat and the Democrats laughed at him. So yes, I do want to know if the same group that tried to sabotage our democracy in 2016 is buying uranium in 2010. I want to know that."

Sen. Angus King appeared on [CNN's State Of The Union](#) (10/29, Tapper), "I think one of the House committees has already begun an oversight committee hearing. I always think oversight hearings are appropriate. I've been trying to understand this deal, I think the important thing that I learned in reading the background is the company changed hands, but the uranium that's mined in the United States cannot leave the United States. So it wasn't really the sale of uranium. It was the sale of a mining and manufacturing company. But there are questions about it. And I think, you know, we need to get to the bottom of them."

Collins: Podesta, Wasserman Schultz Should Be Called To Testify About Trump Dossier.

[Reuters](#) (10/29, Gibson) reports that Sen. Susan Collins told [CBS' Face The Nation](#) Sunday that Clinton campaign chairman John Podesta and former DNC Chairwoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz should be called to testify concerning reports that the DNC and the Clinton campaign paid for parts of the Trump dossier. Collins said, "It's difficult to imagine that a campaign chairman, that the head of the DNC would not know of an expenditure of this magnitude and significance. ... But perhaps there's something more going on here. But certainly, it's worth additional questioning of those two witnesses. And the lawyer; absolutely, he more than anyone." [Politico](#) (10/29, Guida) reports that Collins said, "Certainly, it's worth more questioning of those two witnesses," and the [Washington Times](#) (10/29, Sherfinski) quotes Collins as saying, "They absolutely need to be recalled." Collins "also said she has not yet seen any 'definitive' evidence of collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia." The [AP](#) (10/29) also reports on Collins' comments.

Dickerson said on the [CBS Weekend News](#) (10/29, story 2, 1:50, Quijano) that news of the dossier "certainly helps the President make his case. or at least before this indictment news came forward, about what the Clinton team was up to. But really, there are two separate things. And so particularly with respect to the Senate Intelligence Committee, Sen. Collins was saying that the lawyer, who we know was involved with this creation of the dossier or at least spending money on it, was at the table with John Podesta, the chairman of the Clinton campaign when he said he knew nothing about how it was funded. So that lawyer will now, according to Senator Collins, should come back and testify himself as opposed to sitting there just as somebody there going along with John Podesta."

WTimes: Nunes Has Shifted Russia Debate Closer To Democrats. The [Washington Times](#) (10/29, Scarborough) reports that House Intelligence Committee Chairman Devin Nunes "has shifted the Russia debate in Washington further away from President Trump and closer to Democrats" by "expos[ing] the practice of 'unmasking' by Obama aides and flush[ing] out the source of payments for the scandalous anti-Trump dossier that drove the Russia collusion narrative." While Nunes "talked publicly about his discovery to much derision from Democrats and Washington's press corps," his "legacy lives on" as "both the Senate and House intelligence committees have summoned former Obama aides as witnesses."

Schiff said on [MSNBC AM Joy](#) (10/29), "I used to be part of a commission, the Democracy Assistance Commission, that would meet with emerging democracies, and one of the points we would always make is, if you win an election, when you win an election, you don't try to use the justice system, pervert the justice system to punish your vanquished opponent, and that's what is happening here. The White House in violation of Justice Department policy has intervened with the Justice Department to say we want you to take certain steps, and lift the gag rule to advance an investigation of my vanquished opponent. I have to say for the Republicans in Congress to go along with that, to open up an investigation to become complicit in that makes them part of the dismantling of the checks and balances, one brick at a time."

Book Claims Obama Plotted To "Destroy" Trump. The [Washington Examiner](#) (10/29, Bedard) reports in its "Washington Secrets" column that new book titled, "All Out War: The Plot To Destroy Trump," alleges that former President Obama was "dumbfounded" that Trump beat Clinton in the election and, along with "a top aide began plotting to 'destroy' the president-elect around Christmas" with a goal of setting him up for impeachment. Author Ed Klein describes "a 'Christmastime' dinner during which national security adviser Susan Rice pushed plans to 'unmask, or disclose, the names of several Trump campaign associates who were mentioned or whose conversations were captured in intelligence intercepts of Russian officials.'"

[The Federalist](#) (10/29, Davis) reports that since April of last year, Obama's campaign organization, Obama for America, "has paid over \$972,000 to Perkins Cole," the "law firm that funneled money to Fusion GPS, the firm behind the infamous" Trump dossier. The Federalist adds that the "timing and nature of the payments...raise significant questions about whether OFA was funding Fusion GPS, how much Obama and his team knew about the contents and provenance of the dossier long before its contents were made public, and whether the president or his government lieutenants knowingly used a partisan political document to justify official government actions targeting the president's political opponents named in the dossier."

Rivkin, Casey: Trump Can Shut Down Mueller Probe With Blanket Pardon. In an op-ed for the [Wall Street Journal](#) (10/29), David Rivkin and Lee Casey, who served in the White House Counsel's office and Justice Department in the Reagan and George H.W. Bush Administrations, argue that Mueller's investigation, which has been widely seen as partisan from its start, has become open-ended and Trump can bring it to an end by issuing a blanket pardon to anyone involved in alleged collusion with Russia during the campaign. If Congress was to find evidence of

collusion, they add, the House can decide whether to begin impeachment proceedings.

Twitter Suspends Stone. [USA Today](#) (10/28, Miller) reported Saturday that Twitter has suspended former Trump campaign adviser Roger Stone “after an expletive-filled tweetstorm late Friday attacking CNN and some of the network’s on-air personalities.” Stone “lashed out with vulgarities at anchors Don Lemon and Jake Tapper, among others.” The [New York Times](#) (10/29, Fortin) says Stone’s tweets, which were “littered with expletives,” appeared to be “in response to reports that a federal grand jury had approved charges in the continuing investigation into the Trump campaign’s possible connections to Russia.”

NYTimes Analysis: Warner Leading Critic Of Tech Firms In Russia Investigation. The [New York Times](#) (10/29, Kang) reports on ranking member of the Senate Intelligence Committee Sen. Mark Warner’s (D-VA) role in the Senate investigation into Russian involvement in the 2016 elections, and particularly “how some of the biggest American technology companies, like Facebook, Google and Twitter, were used to spread foreign propaganda.” Executives from those companies will testify before the committee this week. Warner is described as “among the harshest” critics of the companies, after having “built a fortune...as a technology and telecommunications investor and executive.” The companies are arguing against regulation or legislation to compel them to disclose information about political ads, particularly a bill by Sens. Warner, Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), and John McCain (R-AZ). The Times says that the committee chairman, Sen. Richard Burr “has been more reserved than Mr. Warner” and Republicans “have been reluctant to regulate the rapidly evolving industry.”

Mattis Threatens “Massive” Military Response From US Should North Korea Use Nuclear Weapons.

Defense Secretary Mattis during a visit to Seoul on Saturday denounced North Korea’s “outlaw behavior” and vowed the US would have a “massive military response” to any nuclear attack. While the network newscasts did not provide coverage, the major print dailies and wires highlighted that the Defense Secretary’s remarks came a day after he visited the demilitarized zone and ahead of President Trump’s visit to the region.

The [New York Times](#) (10/28, Cooper) reports Mattis, speaking at the South Korean Ministry of National Defense, “accused North Korea of accelerating the threat of nuclear war through its series of nuclear and ballistic missile tests.” He also “characterized Pyongyang’s behavior as threatening and said that the United States would do everything in its power to protect its allies in the region.” According to the [Washington Post](#) (10/28, Taylor), he “offered unequivocal support for American allies in the face of threats from North Korea.” Mattis told reporters, “any attack on the United States or our allies will be defeated, and any use of nuclear weapons by the North will be met with a massive military response that is effective and overwhelming.” In addition, the Defense Secretary “reiterated that the military options being considered were ‘designed to buttress diplomats’ efforts to maintain a deterrent stance and denuclearize the peninsula.’” The [Wall Street Journal](#) (10/28, Cheng, Lubold) reports Mattis acknowledged that although “diplomacy remains our preferred course of action in dealing with North Korea,” he asserted, “I cannot imagine a condition under which the U.S. would accept North Korea as a nuclear power.”

However, the [AP](#) (10/28, Burns) says Mattis “did not mention that...Trump has ratcheted up his own rhetoric.” The AP notes the President in August “warned the North not to make any more threats against the United States, and said that if it did, it would be met with ‘fire and fury like the world has never seen.’” [Reuters](#) (10/28, Stewart) reports “tension between North Korea and the United States has been building after a series of nuclear and missile tests by Pyongyang and bellicose verbal exchanges between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and...Trump.”

[AFP](#) (10/28) highlights that “Mattis’ trip comes ahead of Trump’s first presidential visit to South Korea next month as part of his Asia tour which also includes Japan, China, Vietnam and the Philippines.” AFP adds that “all eyes will be on Trump’s message to the North and Kim,” as the President “is expected to deliver a speech at the South’s parliament and to visit an US military base during a November 7-8 trip to Seoul.”

NYTimes A1: Asian States Reconsidering Nuclear Weapons Amid Threat From North Korea. The [New York Times](#) (10/28, A1, Sanger, Sang-Hun, Rich) reports on its front-page that “as North Korea races to build a weapon that for the first time could threaten American cities, its neighbors are debating whether they need their own nuclear arsenals.” The Times says that “for the first time in recent memory, there is a daily argument raging in both South Korea and Japan – sometimes in public, more often in private – about the nuclear option, driven by worry that the United States might hesitate to defend the countries if doing so might provoke a missile launched from the North at Los Angeles or Washington.”

UN Special Rapporteur Warns Sanctions Could Punish North Korean Populace. The [Wall Street](#)

[Journal](#) (10/27, Fassihi) reported Tomas Ojea Quintana, the UN special rapporteur for human rights in North Korea, in his annual report to the UN General Assembly on the state of human rights in the country on Thursday warned tough new economic sanctions against North Korean government could backfire on the population. At a press conference on Friday, Quintana said, "I don't want to see the U.N. putting the government of North Korea [in a position] to choose between nuclearization and the economy."

Masterminds Behind Kim Jong Nam Murder Remain At Large. The [AP](#) (10/28, Talmadge) reports that during the ongoing "trial that could send two Southeast Asian women to the gallows, Malaysian prosecutors are shining a light on several men at large they say masterminded and played crucial roles in carrying out the assassination of North Korean leader Kim Jong's Un's estranged half brother," Kim Jong Nam. The AP says that since the trial of Siti Aisyah, 25, of Indonesia and Doan Thi Huong, 29, of Vietnam began on Oct. 2, "the alleged role of the four missing suspects has come to dominate the proceedings." The AP recaps "what's come out so far about the missing men, who are referred to officially in court only by their aliases, and what's known about their actions."

Mattis, Pence Deliver New Warning To North Korea Over Nuclear Weapons.

Defense Secretary Mattis arrived in the demilitarized zone on Friday to demand North Korea abandon its nuclear weapons ambitions while Vice President Pence told airmen at Minot Air Force Base that they should "be ready" to act in the event of an emergency. Although just one of the network newscasts provided coverage, reporting considered how their warnings could escalate tensions ahead of President Trump's visit to the region next week.

Richard Engel of [NBC Nightly News](#) (10/27, story 4, 2:10, Holt) reported that Mattis "flew right to North Korea's doorstep...and looked out on to the very hills where North Korea has hundreds of rockets and artillery pieces ready to fire in the event of a war." Along the demilitarized zone, "Mattis came within yards of North Korean soldiers as, in a bizarre scene in this tense place, tourists in the North looked on." The [Wall Street Journal](#) (10/27, Lubold, Cheng) reports Mattis said, "North Korean provocations continue to threaten regional and global security despite unanimous condemnation by the United Nations Security Council." [USA Today](#) (10/27, Onyanga-Omara) reports Mattis also denounced North Korea as "an oppressive regime that shackles its people, denying their freedom, their welfare and their human dignity in pursuit of nuclear weapons and their means of delivery in order to threaten others with catastrophe."

However, [AFP](#) (10/27) reports Mattis said, "As the US Secretary of State Tillerson made clear, our goal is not war but rather the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula." AFP adds Mattis asserted he and South Korean Defense Minister Song Young-Moo "made clear our mutual commitment to a diplomatic solution to address North Korea's reckless, outlaw behavior." [The Hill](#) (10/27, Manchester) reports Mattis continued, "We're doing everything we can to solve this diplomatically, everything we can. But ultimately our diplomats have to be backed up by strong soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines."

The [AP](#) (10/27, Macpherson) reports Vice President Pence during a Friday "visit to one of America's most potent nuclear bases," also "vowed...the U.S. will keep up economic and diplomatic pressure on North Korea to abandon its nuclear and ballistic missile programs." Speaking at Minot Air Force Base, Pence told about 250 airmen "there is no greater force for peace in this world" than the US nuclear arsenal. Pence asserted, "Under President Trump's leadership, we will make sure that our nuclear deterrent is stronger than ever before – modern, robust, flexible, resilient, and ready to confront any and all enemies of peace with a rapid, effective and overwhelming response." [Politico](#) (10/27, Nussbaum) reports Pence said, "Our enemies should never doubt the capabilities of the Armed Forces of the United States of America." He continued, "Anyone who would threaten our nation should know that America always seeks peace, but if we are forced to defend ourselves or our allies, we will do so with military power that is effective and overwhelming." Pence added, "Now, more than ever, your commander in chief is depending on you to be ready."

[Reuters](#) (10/27, Stewart) reports Gen. Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, on Friday also "met with his South Korean counterpart, General Kyeong Doo Jeong, a U.S. military statement said," and he "renewed U.S. warnings of retaliation to further provocations." The statement said Dunford "reaffirmed that any attack by North Korea would be met with a response that will be overwhelming and effective, using the full range of U.S. military capabilities."

In an interview with the [AP](#) (10/27, Pennington), Joseph Yun, the US envoy to North Korea, suggested that with China proving unhelpful in reining in North Korea, "Russia could play a useful

diplomatic role.” Yun added, “If Russia delivers a unified message with the U.S., China, South Korea and Japan that the U.S. is not interested in regime change but rather we want to resolve the WMD issue, they can help better than anyone else to convince them of that.” According to the AP, “Yun said he and...Tillerson want Moscow to support the international pressure campaign against North Korea by implementing U.N sanctions, and to urge the isolated, often inscrutable government to engage in diplomatic efforts.” The AP notes National Security Adviser McMaster last week “addressed Russia’s importance with North Korea, saying it maintained ‘considerable influence’” and “urged Moscow to help ‘convince Kim Jong Un and his regime to move toward denuclearization of the peninsula as really a last chance to avoid severe consequences.’”

According to the [New York Times](#) (10/27, Cooper), Mattis’ visit to the DMZ “highlighted the central contradiction in the Trump administration’s rhetoric on North Korea: that for all the talk of military options, there really aren’t any – at least, none that wouldn’t put the sprawling city of Seoul, with its population of 10 million, in the cross hairs of thousands of Pyongyang’s artillery installations.” While Song “seemed at times to be giving his American counterpart a guided tour of how a strike against North Korea’s nuclear facilities would quickly trigger retaliation,” American defense officials acknowledge that North Korea has “a significant retaliatory capability, including chemical, biological and nuclear weapons as well as conventional forces. It would be virtually impossible, the officials said, to destroy all of North Korea’s offensive capabilities before it could strike Seoul.”

Meanwhile, [CNN’s Situation Room](#) (10/27, 5:52 p.m. EDT, Blitzer) correspondent Will Ripley reported “North Korea has been uncharacteristically quiet. No missile launches in a month and a half. No nuclear tests, at least not yet.” However, Ripley added that throughout North Korea, propaganda posters depict anti-Trump messages, “and the rhetoric has revved up.” He said a senior North Korean diplomat told him that the world must take literally Pyongyang’s “threat to conduct an above-ground nuclear test,” and so “the big question on everybody’s mind” is whether “it will happen when President Trump is in the region, and what would be the result – and the response – from the US.”

[Bloomberg News](#) (10/27, Kong, Cho) says that “while a Trump visit to the DMZ hasn’t been ruled out by the White House, it could be seen as provocative – North and South Korean soldiers stand feet part on either side of a line that marks the heavily fortified border.” Nonetheless, [CNBC](#) (10/27, Daniels) reports on its website that “North Korea stepped up its defiant rhetoric against the U.S. on Friday and said the U.S. is making ‘criminal moves for igniting a war of aggression,’ according to a state-run outlet.”

[UK Blames The ‘WannaCry’ Cyberattack On North Korea.](#) The [New York Times](#) (10/27, Bilefsky) reports UK Minister of Security Ben Wallace told the BBC on Friday that the British government “believes ‘quite strongly’ that North Korea was behind the ‘WannaCry’ cyberattack in May that wreaked havoc on the National Health Service’s computer systems and spread to more than 150 countries.” He asserted, “This attack, we believe quite strongly, came from a foreign state. North Korea was the state that we believe was involved this worldwide attack.” However, Wallace “declined to elaborate on the evidence that had led to the conclusion. ‘I can’t obviously go into the detailed intelligence, but it is widely believed in the community and across a number of countries that North Korea had taken this role,’ he said.”

Federal Grand Jury Approves First Criminal Charges In Russia Investigation.

In the lead story for the [CBS Weekend News](#) (10/28, lead story, 2:05, Ninan), correspondent Reena Ninan reported, “Sources tell CBS News a federal grand jury has approved Special Counsel Robert Mueller’s first charges” in the investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election. Justice reporter Paula Reid said the “charges have been filed under seal, but they could become public as early as Monday, marking the most significant development of the special counsel investigation so far.” Reid added that the target of the indictment is unclear, but “the grand jury has heard testimony from several business associates of former Trump campaign manager Paul Manafort. Investigators also serve a warrant on Manafort’s home over the summer where they obtained documents and other physical evidence. So most of what has been publicly presented to the grand jury has been connected to Manafort. But we also know that Mueller is also looking into former national security adviser Mike Flynn’s lobbying payments to Turkey.”

Meanwhile, Errol Barnett of the [CBS Weekend News](#) (10/28, story 2, 1:35, Ninan) said Trump on Saturday “refrain[ed] from directly responding to news...Mueller has obtained his first indictment, choosing instead to tweet about the GDP and compliments from President Carter.” He added that “despite repeated efforts, the White House is not commenting on the record about what these pending charges from the special counsel could mean,” focusing instead on Trump’s

upcoming visit to Asia. Barnett noted Trump “has long maintained his innocence and that of his campaign team during and after the election, claiming the Department of Justice probe is really motivated by political opponents,” and he and White House press secretary Sarah Sanders “have claimed Hillary Clinton colluded with Russia.”

However, [Politico](#) (10/28, Samuelsohn) reports the White House and personal lawyers “scrambled” on Saturday in anticipation of where Mueller’s Russia investigation could lead. Attorneys close to the case “said their cellphones have been ringing nonstop as they connected with each other, and with reporters,” and “said they wouldn’t be surprised if the charges were targeting Flynn or Manafort family members, or a longtime accountant or lawyer.”

Cobb: Trump Not Concerned About What Former Aides Will Tell Mueller. White House lawyer Ty Cobb told the [New York Times](#) (10/28, Apuzzo) that President Trump is confident that neither Flynn nor Manafort has damaging information about him to give prosecutors. In an interview on Thursday for The Times’ podcast “The New Washington,” Cobb also “said none of the White House documents turned over to Mr. Mueller showed evidence that that anyone colluded with Russia, or that Mr. Trump tried to obstruct justice.”

Trump Team Trains Rage On Clinton, Leaks Following Report Of First Charges In Russia Probe. In an analysis, [Politico](#) (10/28, Karni) reports that despite anticipating for months that Mueller would file criminal charges in his Russia probe, Trump, his lawyers, and senior officials “were all caught off guard” by reports a federal grand jury had approved the first indictment in the investigation. Politico says the resulting lack of information on the case that could have major consequences on the Administration “left many current and former Trump advisers livid, focusing their rage on how the information leaked and on a forever target: Hillary Clinton.”

[The Hill](#) (10/28, Manchester) reports White House press secretary Sarah Sanders said Saturday the evidence of Clinton campaign’s collusion with Russian during the 2016 president election is “indisputable.” Sanders [tweeted](#): “Clinton spokesman just said he’s ‘damn glad’ Clinton campaign colluded w/ Russia to spread disinformation about @POTUS & influence election.” The Hill observes that Sanders’ tweet “appeared to reference comments [former Clinton spokesman Brian] Fallon made to The Washington Post on Friday.” In another [tweet](#) that linked to an article from The Federalist, Sanders wrote, “The evidence Clinton campaign, DNC & Russia colluded to influence the election is indisputable.”

[The Hill](#) (10/28, Carter) “Briefing Room” blog reports former Trump campaign manager Corey Lewandowski said Saturday that focus should be kept on the “continued lies of the Clinton administration.” During an interview on Fox News’ Fox & Friends, Lewandowski argued that the “speculation is so insane right now” and that focus must center on the “Clinton administration” and “the continued fallacies that they perpetuate.”

House Intelligence Committee Reaches Agreement Over Fusion GPS Bank Records. [Reuters](#) (10/28, Volz, Hosenball) reports the House Intelligence Committee announced Saturday it had reached an agreement over its subpoena of Fusion GPS’ bank records as part of the panel’s investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election. The announcement “came a day after a federal judge had given an unnamed bank more time to respond to the congressional panel’s subpoena to Fusion GPS.”

CNN Failed To Disclose Ties To Fusion GPS Operatives. The [Daily Caller](#) (10/28, Ross, Hasson) says CNN’s reporting on the so-called Russia dossier compiled by Fusion GPS “has left out at least one crucial fact: the close ties between the network and the opposition research firm at the center of the dossier controversy.” The Daily Caller states that CNN’s justice correspondent Evan Perez, who led the reporting, has a “personal closeness” with Fusion GPS operatives, as evidenced by Facebook photos of Perez and Fusion GPS partners Neil King and Peter Fritsch appearing together at different public and private events. The Daily Caller adds that “at no point in Perez’s reporting did he disclose his close ties to the Fusion GPS operatives.”

Ex-Trump Aides Say Comey’s “Coordination” Testimony Offers New Context On Clinton Campaign’s Dossier Funding. The [Washington Times](#) (10/28, Scarborough) reports that former FBI Director James Comey’s statement during congressional testimony last March that his agents were investigating “whether there was any coordination between the [Trump] campaign and Russia’s efforts” would fit the Hillary Clinton campaign and Democrats today, according to ex-Trump aides. Former Trump campaign communications adviser Michael Caputo said, “If there was enough Russia collusion evidence to warrant a special counsel for the president, there’s far more now on the Clinton campaign’s connection to a foreign spy ring that included Russians. ... That, coupled with the stymied investigation into the Russian bribery plot and donations directed to the Clinton Foundation, are grounds for a special counsel.”

WPost A1: While Trump Is Eager Salesman On Tax Reform, Congress Crafting Policy.

In a front-page analysis, the [Washington Post](#) (10/27, A1, Paletta, Costa, Rucker) reports that amid the ongoing debates over tax policy, President Trump “has emerged as a relentless salesman, proclaiming one promise after another. ... But for all the bustle emanating from the White House, most of the policy action is at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue, in the Capitol, as Republicans try to rush through a sweeping tax cut package by the end of the year.” The Post highlights Republicans after to craft tax legislation, some of the policy items under debate, and Trump’s support for the package, as long as it benefits the middle class and cuts the corporate tax rate.

White House Report Predicts Faster Economic Growth From Corporate Tax Cuts. The [Wall Street Journal](#) (10/27, Sparshott) reports that a new report released Friday by the White House Council of Economic of Economic Advisers says that reducing the corporate tax rate to 20 percent and permitting companies to write-off the cost of their capital spending would increase business investment, spur faster economic expansion, and raise household income. The Journal adds that the study is meant to bolster the case for cutting corporate taxes and highlights several specific policies.

McConnell Criticized For Locking Democrats Out Of Tax Reform. The [Wall Street Journal](#) (10/27, Andrews) reports some Republicans are criticizing Senate Majority Leader McConnell for keeping Democrats out of the tax reform process, despite their interest in engaging with the GOP. Among them, Rep. Mark Walker warns that the “secrecy and trying to force feed it and all of the sudden” will cause the legislation to fail. Similarly, Rep. Richard Neal says that “for this to succeed, you’re going to need Democratic input.” Despite calls for bipartisanship and President Trump’s push for bipartisanship, the Journal notes that no Democrats have seen the bill ahead of its public release.

Brady: Republicans Want To Increase Retirement Contributions. The [Washington Times](#) (10/27, Persons) reports House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Kevin Brady in an appearance on [Fox News](#) said on Friday that contrary to prior reporting, Republicans “want to increase the amount that you can give to your 401(k) or IRA.” Brady added that he has spoken to President Trump about incentivizing people to “save more and save sooner.”

Governors Criticize Tax Plan’s Proposed Removal Of SALT Deduction. [Reuters](#) (10/27, Kearney) reports the governors of New York and California said on Friday that the tax plan’s proposed elimination of the state and local tax deductions on federal income tax is “an attack” on high-tax states and a “gross manipulation of our tax code.” They went on to argue that the plan would actually make their residents pay more, with New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo’s office claiming that his state’s taxpayers would pay an additional \$5,300 in federal income taxes on average. The [AP](#) (10/27, Ronayne) reports California Gov. Jerry Brown also warned that some California Republicans would lose their seats if they voted for the provision.

WSJournal: Republicans Should Not Flirt With “Millionaire Tax.” In an editorial, the [Wall Street Journal](#) (10/27) writes that Republican considerations of raising the top income tax rate to potentially 42 to 44 percent would signify a capitulation to pressure from redistributionists and would cut back on potential economic gains. The Journal concludes that the point of tax reform is to eliminate subsidies and loopholes that distort economic decisions in favor of lower rates, and that maintaining high rates for millionaires will encourage tax lobbyists and Congress to create more loopholes.

Schumer: Trump Tax Plan Is “Absolute Catastrophe.” In a [USA Today](#) (10/27) op-ed, Senate Minority Leader Schumer criticizes President Trump’s tax plan, arguing that it differs from former president Reagan’s plan in “three major ways:” it hurts the middle class, it would “explode the deficit,” and it hasn’t had any Democrat input. Schumer goes on to detail the plan’s benefits for wealthy taxpayers, and argues that it “will add between \$3 trillion and \$5 trillion to the deficit.” He concludes that the plan is an “absolute catastrophe.”

Marcus: Trump Tax Cuts Are “Dangerous,” Will Explode National Debt. Ruth Marcus writes in her [Washington Post](#) (10/27, Marcus) column that the US “doesn’t need a tax cut,” and that President Trump’s tax reform is “dangerous” because it will “add trillions to the national debt at a point when it is already dangerously large as a share of the economy” at 77 percent. Marcus goes on the argue that Republicans are “desperate for a legislative win,” and are willing to pass a “reckless” bill in order to appeal to voters next year.

Brady Announces Republican Tax Plan Will Preserve Itemized Property Tax Deduction.

[Bloomberg News](#) (10/28, Brody) reports House Ways and Means Chairman Kevin Brady said in a statement Saturday that the Republican tax plan will preserve the “itemized property tax deduction to help taxpayers with local tax burdens,” after pressure from lawmakers. The move

was aimed at resolving an impasse between leadership and Republicans from high-tax states over state and local income tax deductions that “threatened the bill’s prospects in the House.”

House Republicans Concerned About Tax Bill “Secrecy.” [Politico](#) (10/28, Lorenzo, Kim) reports “House Republicans are increasingly alarmed by the secrecy” around the party’s tax bill, and the feeling “extends to their tax aides, who’ve been excluded from a recent series of hours-long member meetings.” According to Politico, the House approach “stands in stark contrast to the other end of the Capitol, where top Senate Republicans want to ensure all GOP senators feel they have buy-in from the start” in order to avoid problems the party experienced with attempting to pass Obamacare repeal earlier this year.

WPost Analysis: Failure To Pass Tax Reform Could Be Paul Ryan’s Downfall. In an analysis, the [Washington Post](#) (10/28, Kane) suggests the upcoming tax reform bill is House Speaker Ryan’s “last, best chance” for a “signature achievement.” According to the Post, failure to pass the bill “would be crippling,” and could result in a “political bloodbath” during the 2018 midterms “that drops the GOP into the minority and boots Ryan off the dais.” The piece goes on to detail obstacles Ryan faces, noting that the party’s “moderate wing is a big part of Ryan’s challenge.”

NYTimes Profiles Mnuchin Aide Justin Muzinich, “Central Player” In Tax Reform. The [New York Times](#) (10/28, Rappeport) profiles Justin Muzinich, a top aide to Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin that “has emerged as a central player in the Trump administration’s tax overhaul effort.” According to congressional aides, Muzinich “has the authority to speak on behalf of the secretary.” The piece goes on to detail his past work, which focused heavily on tax policy, and his “reputation for pragmatism over ideology.”

NYTimes A1: Experts Divided On Impact Of Proposed 401(k) Contribution Cap. In a front-page article, the [New York Times](#) (10/28, A1, Cohen) examines the controversy around a Republican proposal to cap 401(k) contributions. Despite concerns, both President Trump and Rep. Kevin Brady have said they do not want to undermine retirement savings. The Times explains the change may be critical in paying for the Republican tax plan, which must “have no impact on the budget at the end of 10 years” if passed via the reconciliation process. The move has drawn criticism from many, including former economic adviser to President George H.W. Bush William Gale, who calls it “an enormous budget gimmick” that uses “future revenues to pay for current tax cuts.” However, others say it “makes little difference whether they pay taxes on retirement savings now or in the future.” Similarly, James Choi, a finance professor at the Yale School of Management, found in a study that the “tax deduction was a pretty minor force” in impacting retirement savings.

National Association of Home Builders To Oppose GOP Tax Bill.

The [Wall Street Journal](#) (10/28, Rubin) reports the National Association of Home Builders has announced it will oppose the House Republicans’ soon-to-be-released tax reform bill after GOP leadership decided not to replace mortgage interest and property tax deductions with a new tax credit and instead said they would include an itemized deduction for property taxes. However, the Journal acknowledges details of the legislation remain elusive.

Despite Paris Accord Withdrawal, US To Attend Global Climate Change Talks.

[Reuters](#) (10/28, Doyle, Chestney) reports a US delegation led by Under Secretary for Political Affairs Thomas Shannon will attend next month’s climate talks in Germany centered on drafting a “rule book” for implementing the 2015 Paris climate accord. In June, President Trump withdrew the US from the agreement; however, the US “retains its place in the talks because the Paris pact stipulates” it cannot formally withdraw until 2020. The US presence comes “to the dismay of some nations that want Washington sidelined.” Many American allies, “including France, Canada and Britain, hope to coax Trump to end up staying in the pact,” although other delegates expect some US officials to “contribute to clear, enforceable rules that will be in U.S. interests whether it is in or out of the deal.” Reuters predicts the treatment if the US delegation “is likely to hinge on whether Washington limits itself to technical details of the rule book or promotes Trump’s pro-coal political agenda.”

Gore: “Zero Chance” Trump And Pruitt Will Change Their Minds On Climate Change.

The [Chicago Sun-Times](#) (10/29, Dudek) reports that during a Friday appearance at the Chicago Humanities Festival, former Vice President Al Gore said that he does not expect President Trump and EPA Administration Pruitt to change their positions on climate change. Gore said, “I tried to convince Donald Trump. I’ve had many conversations with him after the election, after he went into the White House, and I thought he would come to his senses, but I was wrong.” Regarding

Trump and Pruitt, Gore said, "There's zero chance, in my opinion, of changing their minds."

USA Today Weighs Administration's Approach To Clean Power Plan.

[USA Today](#) (10/29) editorializes that the Trump Administration's recent focus on "gutting the Clean Power Plan...demonstrates sheer contempt for laws governing clean air and the benefits of environmental regulation." The editorial board describes the advances that the renewable energy industry has made recently, even in the wake of President Trump's decision to remove the US from the Paris climate agreement. USA Today asserts that, while the Clean Power Plan or something similar could still survive the attempted dismantling, it "might take years or bureaucratic and legal wrangling" while our planet continues to grow warmer.

Karen Harbert, CEO of the US Chamber of Commerce's Global Energy Institute, asserts in [USA Today](#) (10/29) that the "fundamental flaw" of the Clean Power Plan "was that it would have intentionally raised the cost of energy without regard to the impact on families and businesses." Harbert opines that we should be seeking to make every form of energy more affordable and cleaner, rather than relying on mandates from Washington. Harbert does concede that "the US Chamber of Commerce believes that the climate is changing, and that man is contributing to these changes."

Editorial Wrap-Up

New York Times.

"Insect Armageddon." The [New York Times](#) (10/29) editorializes that "the fate of the world's insects is inseparable from our own," and that "there is alarming new evidence that insect populations are in rapid decline." The Times describes a new study co-authored by the University of Sussex's Prof. Dave Goulson, which found that the biomass of insects collected in German nature preserves declined by 76 percent in 25 years. The Times opines that insects are necessary "for pollinating our food" and providing a source of food to other animals. Therefore, humanity must take steps immediately to stop their decline, including reducing pesticide and herbicide use and creating buffer zones surrounding single-crop fields.

"Phil Murphy For Governor Of New Jersey." The [New York Times](#) (10/29) editorializes that voters should choose Phil Murphy for governor of New Jersey because he "guarantees voters an end to the Chris Christie era." The Times asserts that "New Jersey can't afford another four years of Christie-inspired chaos," and that the Republican candidate in the election, Kim Guadagno, would offer an agenda that is too similar to that of the incumbent governor's. The Times opines that Murphy's experience at Goldman Sachs and within the Democratic Party makes up for concerns about his lack of "political experience in the state," and agrees with his campaign trail assertion that "he sees New Jersey as America's best opportunity for a turnaround."

"Abandoned In Calais." A [New York Times](#) (10/27) editorial recalls a now-shuttered refugee camp near Calais, dubbed the "Jungle," that became "a symbol of Europe's failure on migrants." The Times says French President Emmanuel Macron's government and local authorities "are making life as miserable as possible for migrants" to prevent another camp like the "Jungle" from erecting. "The result is inhumane conditions for the some 700 migrants" that are so bad even the United Nations condemned them last week. The Times argues while "French authorities need to provide them with proper shelter now, along with better sanitation, food and medical care," Britain, which "has resettled less than half of the 480 unaccompanied child migrants it promised," can also greatly assist in the crisis.

Washington Post.

"Trump Needs To Say Something – And Do Something – About The Assault On The Rohingya." The [Washington Post](#) (10/29) editorializes that the Burmese Rohingya community is being subjected to "the biggest and most ruthless campaign of ethnic cleansing the world has seen in years." The Post asserts that the Muslim Rohingya are a hated minority in majority-Buddhist Burma, and that individuals both in Burma and in the United States have offered insufficient support for members of the community in their time of crisis. The Post opines that the Trump Administration should use President Trump's upcoming trip to Asia to speak out against the crisis, and that the State Department should formally use the term "ethnic cleansing" to refer to the forced movement of the Rohingya from Burma to Bangladesh.

"A Trump Tax Idea That Might Actually Do Some Good." In an editorial, the [Washington Post](#) (10/29) expresses hope that National Economic Council Director Cohn's reported floating of a gas

tax increase in a recent meeting with members of Congress could lead to this smart policy being enacted. The Post writes, "The tax has idled at 18.4 cents per gallon for a quarter-century. Faced with infrastructure spending needs, many states...have recently upped their state-level gas taxes. A reasonable Congress would share their rationality."

"Chevy Chase Populism In Maryland." The [Washington Post](#) (10/29) editorializes that Maryland gubernatorial candidate Ben Jealous' stated goal to provide "free tuition for Marylanders who attend public universities, colleges and community colleges" is a craven political strategy and will be a potentially reckless piece of legislation if it ever advances to that stage. The Post calls Jealous "irresponsible" for floating the idea when a similar bill to provide free community college for 40,000 Maryland students failed this year because it was considered to be unaffordable, even though Jealous' proposal would likely cost hundreds of millions of dollars more annually if it came to fruition. The Post goes on to assert that Jealous' proposal could "amount to a gigantic giveaway for thousands of well-off families" with children who attend one of the state's expensive four-year universities. The Post argues that the money that would be earmarked for this "giveaway" could be better spent on "K-12 schools, parks or mental-health care."

Wall Street Journal.

"Game Of Healthcare Thrones." The [Wall Street Journal](#) (10/29) says in an editorial that with the Affordable Care Act appearing to be here to stay, health sector firms are looking for new ways to be profitable in the face of stricter federal regulation. The Journal considers the possible CVS-Aetna deal as an example.

"Toomey's 'Guidance' Repeal Guide." The [Wall Street Journal](#) (10/29) editorializes that congressional Republicans should utilize the Congressional Review Act to reverse a lending guidance that the Obama Administration issued in 2013 that focused on leveraged lending. The Journal opines that policy grounds justify the overriding of the guidance because it has increased costs and cut off lending since it was issued.

"How To Kill American Solar." In an editorial, the [Wall Street Journal](#) (10/29) says that it opposes tariffs on foreign solar panels that could hurt the US solar sector. The tariffs are being sought by US solar-panel makers Suniva and Solar World, which argue that importation of panel parts are undercutting US business. But the Journal argues that the future of the US solar sector is in innovation, not in component manufacture, and that the tariffs would impede advances.

Big Picture

Headlines From Today's Front Pages.

Wall Street Journal:

[GOP Plan For A Speedy Tax Overhaul Faces Uncertain Road](#)

[Mueller Set To Act On Charges](#)

[Why Are Markets Rising Everywhere? Investors Can't Stop Buying Every Dip](#)

[Foreign Companies In China Get A New Partner: The Communist Party](#)

New York Times:

[Russia Uses Its Oil Giant, Rosneft, As A Foreign Policy Tool](#)

[Sexual Misconduct In California's Capitol Is Difficult To Escape](#)

[Five Years After Sandy, Are We Better Prepared?](#)

[2 Navy SEALs Under Suspicion In Strangling Of Green Beret In Mali](#)

['Bedlam Out Here In Arizona' After Jeff Flake Departs Senate Race](#)

[Trump Tries To Shift Focus As First Charges Reportedly Loom In Russia Case](#)

['I Don't Want An Independent Catalonia': Rally Backs Unified Spain](#)

Washington Post:

[Puerto Rico Canceling Controversial Contract](#)

[Setback Clouds Tax Bill's Release](#)

[Facing Heat On Russia, Trump Hits At Clinton](#)

[Pelosi Stakes Hopeful Place At Center Of 2018 Fight](#)

[Nursing Home Death Prompts New Questions For UMC For Troubled United Medical Center](#)

Financial Times:

[Spain Faces Test Of Authority In Catalonia Under Direct Rule](#)
[Powell Leading In Trump's Fed Chair Reality-TV Spectacle](#)
[Customs Teams In EU27 Unprepared For Hard Brexit](#)

Washington Times:

[CBO Defends Powers Amid Republican Criticism Over Bad Budget Forecasts](#)
[Corker To Use Power, Alliance With Flake To Question Trump On Foreign Policy](#)
[Mueller Investigation Enters New Phase: Criminal Charges](#)
[Nunes' Investigating Digs Up Trove Of Democrat Connections To Russia Dossier](#)
[George Washington's Church To Tear Down Memorial Honoring First President](#)

Story Lineup From Last Night's Network News:

ABC: Severe Weather; Russia Meddling Investigation-Special Counsel; Navy SEAL-Training Death Investigation; Afghanistan US Casualty; Puerto Rico Hurricane Recovery-Controversy; Spain-Catalonia Independence; Weinstein Sexual Harassment Scandal; Halloween Costume Warning; Airline-Windshield Crack; Airline-Bird Strike; UK Royal Family-Possible Security Breach; Baseball World Series; Veteran Uncle.

CBS: Russia Meddling Investigation-Special Counsel; Russia Meddling Investigation-Expert Comment; Severe Weather; Puerto Rico Hurricane Recovery-Controversy; Hurricane Sandy Recovery; NFL-Kneeling Protests; Persian Gulf Diplomatic Crisis; Wild Horse Protection; James Madison Plantation.

NBC: Russia Meddling Investigation-Special Counsel; Puerto Rico Hurricane Recovery-Controversy; Severe Weather; Weather Forecast; Obamacare Impacts; Spain-Catalonia Independence; NFL News; Sexual Harassment Prevention; Virginia State Election Candidate; Airline-Bird Strike; Space Rock Flyby; High School Marching Band.

Network TV At A Glance:

Russia Meddling Investigation-Special Counsel – 9 minutes, 45 seconds

Severe Weather – 8 minutes, 5 seconds

Puerto Rico Hurricane Recovery-Controversy – 6 minutes, 45 seconds

Story Lineup From This Morning's Radio News Broadcasts:

ABC: Navy SEAL-Training Death Investigation; Student Loan Debt Policy; Russia Meddling Investigation-Special Counsel; Puerto Rico Hurricane Recovery-Controversy.

CBS: Russia Meddling Investigation-Special Counsel; Puerto Rico Hurricane Recovery-Controversy; Severe Weather; Baseball World Series; NFL-Kneeling Protests; Spain-Catalonia Independence.

FOX: Russia Meddling Investigation-Special Counsel; White House-Coming Agendas; Baseball World Series.

NPR: Tax Reform Plan; Puerto Rico Hurricane Recovery-Controversy; UK Royal Family-Possible Security Breach; Baseball World Series.

Washington Schedule

Today's Events In Washington.

White House:

PRESIDENT TRUMP — Meets with Secretary of State Rex Tillerson; has lunch with Vice President Mike Pence and Attorney General Jeff Sessions; meets with Secretary of Defense James Mattis; will participate in Halloween at the White House.

VICE PRESIDENT PENCE — Joins the President for lunch with Attorney General Jeff Sessions; participates in a swearing-in ceremony for Steve King as U.S. Ambassador to the Czech Republic.

US Senate: 3:00 PM Senate votes on district judge nominee – Senate convenes and proceeds to executive session to resume consideration of the nomination of Trevor McFadden to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Columbia, with agenda including confirmation vote * Motion to invoke cloture on the nomination passed by 85 votes to 12 last week

Location: Washington, DC <http://www.senate.gov/>

4:15 PM Sen. Coons 'Pen and Pad' session on AUMF, U.S. operations in Africa – U.S. Senator Chris Coons (D-Del.), a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, will hold an on-the-record "Pen and Pad" session in the Senate Press Gallery to discuss both the Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF) hearing with Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Secretary of Defense James Mattis and U.S. military operations in Africa.

Location: Senate Press Gallery (S-316) coons.senate.gov
<https://twitter.com/SenCoonsOffice>

5:00 PM Secretaries Tillerson and Mattis testify to Senate Foreign Relations Committee on AUMFs – Hearing on 'The Authorizations for the Use of Military Force: Administration Perspective', with testimony from Secretary of State Rex Tillerson; and Secretary of Defense James Mattis

Location: Dirksen Senate Office Building, Rm 419, Washington, DC
<http://foreign.senate.gov/>

5:30 PM Senate Governmental Affairs Committee votes on nominee for GSA head – Business Meeting, with agenda including consideration of nomination of Emily Murphy to be General Services Administration Administrator

Location: U.S. Capitol, S-216, Washington, DC <http://hsgac.senate.gov/>
<https://twitter.com/SenateHSGAC>

US House: 1:30 PM Field hearing on 'Examining Physical Security and Cybersecurity at Our Nation's Ports'

Location: Port of Los Angeles, 425 S Palos Verdes St, San Pedro, CA homeland.house.gov
<https://twitter.com/HouseHomeland>

Other: No relevant event scheduled.

Last Laughs

Late Night Political Humor.

No late-night talk show aired on Sunday night.

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