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I wanted to make sure you saw that the n g a will be in d c next week and that governor Herbert hopes to raise BE with the president.

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DOI In The News**Republicans Explore Ways To "Modernize" Endangered Species Act.**

The Hill (2/15, Cama) reports that the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee held a hearing Wednesday to consider ways to "modernize" the Endangered Species Act. Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Chairman John Barrasso "said at the hearing that he hopes to change the law to give more voice to landowners, industry groups and others who think species protections hamper businesses and other land uses." However, "the GOP lawmakers sought to clarify repeatedly that they support the goals of the ESA and want also to improve how it saves threatened plant and animals species."

The Washington Post (2/15, Fears) reports that "in his opening remarks, Barrasso declared that the act 'is not working today,' adding that

'states, counties, wildlife managers, home builders, construction companies, farmers, ranchers and other stakeholders' have made that clear in complaints about how it impedes land management plans, housing development and cattle grazing, particularly in western states, such as Wyoming."

CNN (2/15, Marsh) reports that "environmentalists who support the law say the Endangered Species Act is not broken nor is it in need of 'modernization.'" In testimony before the committee, Jamie Rappaport Clark, president and CEO of Defenders of Wildlife, said, "For more than 40 years, the ESA has been successful, bringing the bald eagle, the American alligator, the Stellar sea lion, the peregrine falcon and numerous other species back from the brink of extinction. Based on data from the (Fish and Wildlife Service), the ESA has saved 99% of listed species from extinction." Clark "told the committee in her experience, Republican efforts to 'modernize' the Endangered Species Act have 'almost always been code to push forward an agenda to weaken or gut the nation's premier and most effective wildlife conservation law. That agenda – backed by special interests – ignores the public value of wildlife conservation.'" "

The Daily Caller (2/15, Bastasch) reports that the former head of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under President Barack Obama "warned lawmakers the planet is in the midst of a 'sixth mass extinction' that could see the end of 'some of our planet's most magnificent creatures.'" Dan Ashe said, "Climate change threatens to accelerate this crisis. Without critical intervention today, we are facing the very real possibility of losing some of our planet's most magnificent creatures such as cheetahs, elephants, gorillas, sea turtles, and sharks."

Additional coverage was provided by Politico Morning Energy (2/15, Adragna), the Huffington Post (2/15, D'angelo), TIME (2/15, Worland), and Agri-Pulse (2/15, Enoch).

Utah Gov. Herbert Looking To Discuss Bears Ears National Monument During DC Trip.

The AP (2/15, Price) reports that Utah Gov. Gary Herbert "hopes to use his trip to Washington next week to discuss states' authority and the new Bears Ears National Monument with President Donald Trump's administration." Herbert said Wednesday "that he doesn't know what kind of opportunity he will have to speak with U.S. officials about the Bears Ears National Monument, but it may come up while he's in Washington for National Governors Association meetings." He is also "set to discuss the issue Thursday with outdoor recreation officials upset about Utah's stance, but the governor said he's unsure to what extent he will raise it in the nation's capital next week."

Coverage by the AP was also picked up by the Logan (UT) Herald Journal (2/15, Price), the San Francisco (CA) Chronicle (2/15, Price), and U.S. News & World Report (2/15, Price).

Additional coverage was provided by KUER-FM Salt Lake City (2/15,

Fahys).

Former Secretary Jewell Visits New Civil Rights National Monuments.

WBRC-TV Birmingham, AL (2/15, Hayes) reports that former Interior Secretary Sally Jewell "visited the new civil rights national monuments in Anniston and Birmingham that were designated by former President Barack Obama just before leaving office." Jewell "says Anniston's monuments to the 1961 Freedom Riders bus burning incident sends a positive message." She said, "This is a city that recognizes that embracing painful parts of its history and its past enables it to move forward, and enables people to come to Anniston and say, this is a community that has learned some powerful lessons."

Additional coverage was provided by WSFA-TV Montgomery, AL (2/15, Hayes).

Trump Lifts Hiring Freeze At Forest Service.

Outside (2/15, Ebberts) reports that President Trump's "temporary federal hiring freeze has been lifted for the U.S. Forest Service, according to an internal memo from the Department of Agriculture sent to staffers on Tuesday." According to the article, "other federal land management agencies staffed with seasonal employees, including the Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, and Natural Resource Conservation Service may follow soon." The article notes that "about one-third of the Forest Service's employees are seasonal, meaning they work for four to six months a year on trail crews or as firefighters, and the freeze stopped the agency from hiring them back for the coming summer months, the busiest season."

Zinke Would Be Eighth In Presidential Order Of Succession.

The Bozeman (MT) Daily Chronicle (2/15, Carter) reports that "once confirmed as the next secretary of the interior, Montana's U.S. Rep. Ryan Zinke will be eighth in the presidential order of succession."

Additional Coverage: Oregon Counties Sue Over Cascade-Siskiyou Expansion.

Additional coverage that a group of Oregon counties is suing the federal government over the expansion of the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument was provided by Ashland (OR) Jefferson Public Radio (2/15, Blanchard).

America's Great Outdoors

National Park Service

National Parks In Southwest Help NPS Break Annual Visitation Record.

The Las Vegas Review-Journal (2/15, Brean) reports that "a milestone

birthday led to a record year for the National Park Service and several of its sites closest to Las Vegas." The article notes that "Death Valley, Zion, Joshua Tree, Grand Canyon and Great Basin national parks all saw record traffic in 2016, as the Park Service celebrated its centennial with a host of events and promotional campaigns nationwide." The NPS "as a whole set a new record last year with almost 331 million visits to the 376 sites managed by the agency, according to statistics released Wednesday." According to the article, "that represented an increase of nearly 8 percent from 307 million visitations in 2015."

Nonprofit Land Trust Gives 3,000 Acres To Mojave National Preserve.

The [AP](#) (2/15) reports that "a nonprofit group has donated more than 3,000 acres of desert land to the Mojave National Preserve." The Mojave Desert Land Trust announced Wednesday that "it's handed over ecologically and historically significant land to the national park." The article notes that "the 110 parcels of land already are contained within the national preserve."

Coverage by the AP was also picked up by [U.S. News & World Report](#) (2/15) and the [Los Angeles \(CA\) Times](#) (2/15, Press).

NPS Plans Repairs For Black Bridge, Indian Garden Pump Houses.

The [AP](#) (2/16) reports that the National Park Service is "planning to repair the pump houses at Indian Garden and the Black Bridge near Phantom Ranch at Grand Canyon National Park." Beginning this week, "crews will replace the roof-mounted HVAC units and the roofing system on both water pump houses at Indian Garden that supply water to the South Rim." Also, "Park Service trails crew will rehabilitate the Black Bridge – also called the Kaibab Suspension Bridge – across the Colorado River starting around March 7. "According to the article, "completion of both projects is anticipated in mid-April and park officials say the projects may temporarily disrupt backcountry users."

AmeriCorps NCCC Team Serving At Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

The [Chattanooga \(TN\)](#) (2/15) reports that "an AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) team, River 3, is serving with the Great Smoky Mountains National Park until Thursday, March 9." According to the article, "the NCCC team of 10 members from the Southern Region campus in Vicksburg, Ms., is working to maintain and rehabilitate trails in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park." Team members are "also assisting with environmental recovery in response to the wildfire in Gatlinburg."

Gulf Islands National Seashore Announces Fort Pickens Single-lane Road Closures To Continue.

The [Pensacola \(FL\) News Journal](#) (2/15) reports that "officials at Gulf Islands National Seashore announced single-lane and parking lot closures

within the Fort Pickens area will continue through the end of the month.”

Opinion: National Parks Are To Be Revered.

In a piece for the [Huffington Post](#) (2/15, Williams), author Terry Tempest Williams writes that national parks are not just America’s “best idea.” Williams sees them as “our evolving idea, emblematic of our ongoing struggle to create circles of reverence and respect where we remember what it means to be human and are reminded that humans are not the only species to live and dream.”

Fish and Wildlife Service

Jury Selected In Second Oregon Occupation Trial.

The [Oregonian](#) (2/15, Bernstein) reports that a jury of 12 has been selected for the trial of four Malheur National Wildlife Refuge occupation defendants. The newspaper describes several of the jurors. “In other developments,” the Oregonian says, prosecutors are seeking permission from the Justice Department to compel the testimony of a former radio journalist who interviewed occupier Ryan Bundy in January 2016. In the interview, Bundy describes the occupiers’ motivations. Defense attorneys have questioned why the government’s move to seek the journalist’s testimony comes only a few days away from the start of the trial.

Additional Coverage: Environmental Group Sues Over Delay Of Bumblebee’s Endangered Listing.

Additional coverage that an environmental group has sued the Trump Administration “for delaying the listing of the rusty patched bumblebee as an endangered species” was provided by the [Christian Science Monitor](#) (2/15, Williams), the [Washington \(DC\) Post](#) (2/15, Fears), [USA Today](#) (2/15, Rice), and [Newsday \(NY\)](#) (2/15, Robinson).

Additional Coverage: FWS Proposes An Emperor Goose Subsistence Hunt.

Additional coverage that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has “submitted a proposal to open a subsistence hunt and a general hunt for the Emperor Goose in Alaska” was provided by the [Alaska Public Radio Network](#) (2/15, MacArthur).

Additional Coverage: Plan For Grizzlies In North Cascades Draws Mixed Reactions.

Additional coverage of the open house held on “the federal government’s recently released draft plan to restore grizzly bears to the North Cascades” was provided by the [Ellensburg \(WA\) Daily Record](#) (2/15, Swift).

Migratory Bird Treaty Act Criticized For Blocking Development.

In an op-ed for the [Wall Street Journal](#) (2/15, Finley), editorial writer

Allysia Finley criticizes the Migratory Bird Treaty Act as an impediment to development. At issue is the legal ambiguity, which makes developers overly cautious. Finley argues that the Migratory Bird Treaty Act has been superseded by the Endangered Species Act, so it should be retired.

Bureau of Land Management

BLM's Planning 2.0 Rule Under Fire.

The [Washington Post](#) (2/15, Harvey) reports that a resolution to nullify the BLM Planning 2.0 rule has "already passed in the House and may soon come to a vote in the Senate." Under the Congressional Review Act, "the rule would not just be revisited it would be done away with entirely, with a provision prohibiting any substantially similar rule from ever being enacted again without congressional approval." Environmentalists have "maintained that concerns about specific provisions of the rule could still be addressed administratively by the BLM, instead of subjecting the entire regulation to the chopping block."

In an op-ed for the [Denver Post](#) (2/15, Baskfield), Tyler Baskfield is sportsmen's coordinator in Colorado for Trout Unlimited, writes that "this misguided move to repeal Planning 2.0 is a thumb in the eye of sportsmen and others who believe local residents and governments should have more of a say in how public lands are managed." According to Baskfield, "the BLM developed Planning 2.0 in response to concerns about the lack of transparency in public lands management and to create a more collaborative planning process with opportunities for meaningful public involvement." Baskfield asserts that Planning 2.0 "gives sportsmen, local governments, landowners and residents more input early on in the planning process and this 'smart from the start' approach helps to avoid conflict by bringing stakeholders together to settle thorny land use issues, such as where to site oil and gas development and how best to allow multiple uses of the land while ensuring the health of wildlife, rivers and other natural resources."

Additional coverage was provided by [Think Progress](#) (2/8, Richards).

BLM Agent Testifies Bundy Ranch Standoff Gunman Posed Threat.

The [AP](#) (2/15, Ritter) reports that "a federal agent testified Wednesday that he saw a 'sniper' behind a concrete barrier on a freeway overpass pointing a military-style weapon at him while a crowd of protesters in a dry river bed called for the government to release Nevada rancher Cliven Bundy's cattle in April 2014." Bureau of Land Management Special Agent Michael Johnson "told a U.S. District Court jury hearing a third day of evidence in Las Vegas that he'll never forget the feeling of fear, and that that he 'absolutely' felt his life was in danger." Johnson "testified he took cover for more than an hour behind a portable generator trailer, and never raised his handgun or AR-15 rifle at the overpass or at unarmed men, women and children in the wash below."

Coverage by the AP was also picked up by the [Reno \(NV\) Gazette-](#)

Journal (2/15, Ritter), the Salt Lake (UT) Tribune (2/15, Ritter), the Bristol (VA) Herald Courier (2/15, Ritter), U.S. News & World Report (2/15, Ritter), and KTNV-TV Las Vegas (NV) Las Vegas (2/15).

BLM Approves New Phosphate Mine In Southeast Idaho.

The Idaho State Journal (2/15, Evensen) reports that the Bureau of Land Management on Monday "gave its final approval for a 2.4-mile-long open pit phosphate mine in Caribou County." But "an appeal filed on the same day is stopping the work from moving forward at least for now." Canada-based Agrium "proposed the Rasmussen Valley Mine 18 miles northeast of Soda Springs to replace the existing North Rasmussen Ridge Mine, which will be mined out later this year." Agrium officials "say the project has involved thorough environmental assessments, community engagement and years of research." However, "the Yellowstone to Uintas Connection (Y2U), which describes itself as a nonprofit organization working to protect the integrity and habitat quality of the wildlife corridor connecting the Great Yellowstone Ecosystem to the Uinta Mountains and Southern Rockies, questions the thoroughness and legality of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Record of Decision (ROD)."

Additional Coverage: Public Meeting Held On Gold Butte National Monument.

Additional coverage of the public meeting hosted by the BLM on "the future of the newly designated Gold Butte National Monument" was provided by the Moapa Valley (NV) Progress (2/15, Snow).

Securing America's Energy Future

Offshore Energy Development

Rules For Removing Defunct Rigs Delayed To March.

The Houma (LA) Courier (2/15, Joe) reports that "the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management's recent decision to delay costly new financial obligations for removing dormant offshore infrastructure recognizes that oil producers are struggling to meet their responsibilities due to the downturn in crude prices and how bankruptcies are complicating the process." The new guidelines, "which originally took effect in September but have been delayed until March, require producers to financially guarantee the entirety of their current and future obligations to dismantle unused facilities and permanently plug wells."

Scientists Present Findings On Impacts Of BP Oil Spill.

The New Orleans Times-Picayune (2/15) provides photos and graphics from presentations by scientists at the Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill and Ecosystem Science Conference in New Orleans that was held February 6-9. Researchers who participated in the Natural Resource Damage Assessment after the 2010 BP oil spill explained the damage to wildlife, land onshore,

nearshore waters, the sea floor, air and the water column.

Onshore Energy Development

Federal Judge Rejects Landowner Challenge To Dakota Access Pipeline.

The [AP](#) (2/15) reports from Des Moines, IA that US District Judge Jeffrey Farrell "has ruled against 14 Iowa landowners who sued to block the Dakota Access pipeline from crossing their property, concluding that the Iowa Utilities Board properly approved a permit for its construction." Judge Farrell said in a decision filed on Wednesday "that the board adequately considered whether the pipeline provides a public convenience and necessity and its decision to grant a license was supported by state law and evidence." The AP adds that "the landowners challenged the board's decision claiming it was illegal to take farmland for a pipeline that provides no public service to Iowans."

Trump Faces Challenge In Bringing Back Coal Jobs.

[PBS](#) (2/15, Sheldon) reports that many "miners saw the election of Donald Trump as a moment of hope," but "for Trump, moving beyond the campaign rhetoric and delivering on the promise to bring back mining will be a challenge." According to the article, "while mining has always been a volatile industry, with cycles of boom and bust, many economists and energy experts say the current decline, at least in Appalachia, is here to stay." Among the factors is "increased automation" and the "boom in natural gas production."

Pope Francis Offers Implicit Endorsement Of Dakota Access Protesters.

[Reuters](#) (2/15, Pullella) reports Pope Francis appeared to offer an implicit endorsement for the Native Americans seeking to halt the Dakota Access pipeline when he said indigenous cultures have right to defend "their ancestral relationship to the earth." While he did not specifically mention the pipeline conflict, he said development had to work with "the protection of the particular characteristics of indigenous peoples and their territories." He said the need to protect those territories was "especially clear when planning economic activities which may interfere with indigenous cultures." He also said that "the right to prior and informed consent (of native peoples) should always prevail." The [AP](#) (2/15, Winfield) reports Francis met with representatives of indigenous peoples who were attending a UN agricultural meeting. He said the key issue facing them is how to reconcile economic development and the protection of culture and territory. If there is prior and informed consent, it is "possible to guarantee peaceful cooperation between governing authorities and indigenous peoples, overcoming confrontation and conflict." Francis said, "For governments, this means recognizing that indigenous communities are a part of the

population to be appreciated and consulted, and whose full participation should be promoted at the local and national level.” The Washington Post (2/15, Mufson) reports this is not the first indirect criticism the pope has levied at US issues. Earlier, he criticized President Trump’s plan to build a wall with Mexico. He said, “In the social and civil context as well, I appeal not to create walls, but to build bridges. ... To not respond to evil with evil. To defeat evil with good, the offense with forgiveness. A Christian would never say ‘you will pay for that.’ Never.”

The AP (2/15) reports US District Court Judge Jeffrey Farrell ruled against a group of 14 Iowa landowners who sued to block the Dakota Access pipeline from crossing the property, saying the Iowa Utilities Board properly approved a permit for its construction. Farrell said the board adequately considered the public convenience and necessity of the pipeline, and its decision to grant a license was properly supported by state law and evidence. Bill Hanigan, the attorney for the landowners, says the decision will be appealed to the Iowa Supreme Court.

EVP Of Dakota Access Company Likens Protesters To Terrorists.

Bloomberg News (2/15, Natter) reports Joey Mahmoud, an EVP for Energy Transfer Partners, compared pipeline protesters to terrorists in his written testimony before a panel of the House Energy and Commerce Committee. He said, “I fear the aggressive tactics we have seen in North Dakota will soon be the norm – if they are not already. ... Had these actions been undertaken by foreign nationals, they could only be described as acts of terrorism.” Mahmoud said employees and their children have faced death threats and activists broke into and shut down pump stations on four operational pipelines. He claimed that the activists were being paid as part of a “well-funded effort” that is hostile to fossil fuels. Harold Frazier, chairman of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe said likening protesters to terrorists was unfair and that activists have been peaceful while law enforcement has aggressively used water canons and rubber bullets. The AP (2/15, Daly) reports Mahmoud said protesters have “assaulted numerous pipeline personnel” while destroying millions of dollars in construction equipment, and even firing a pistol at law enforcement. He omitted the comment when he read his testimony to the committee, but it was included in written comments submitted to the panels. The Washington Times (2/15, Richardson) reports Frazier, in his response, said, “I’ve seen from the cops the shooting of rubber bullets, shooting tear gas canisters. I’ve seen them use water cannons on people when it was like 22 degrees. And that went on for hours. ... So I don’t know how he could say and label our people as terrorists. From what I’ve seen, Morton County are the terrorists.” Standing Rock Sioux council member Chad Harrison described the pipeline as an “opportunity lost,” because for three years, the government and ETP “ignored the concerns of the tribe.” he said, “Consulting does not mean telling us what you are going to do and how you are going to do it. It means listening and making the necessary changes to ensure these projects do not harm our people, our lands and

our resources.”

The Hill (2/15, Henry) reports Mahmoud and representatives to the tribe were testifying before the hearing on energy infrastructure improvements. Mahmoud blamed the “political decision” to withhold an easement on political appointees in the Obama Administration. He also said that the company tried to work with the Standing Rock Sioux tribe, but its efforts were rebuffed. He said, “Requests for consultation were mostly denied. ... We had some conversations with the tribal chairman, but at the same time we were not able to have meaningful consultation due to lack of engagement.” Harrison pushed back against the company calling itself a victim when it has clearly benefited under President Trump. He said, “Dakota Access is a multibillion-dollar pipeline company in which the president of the United States has been an investor and whose CEO has been a campaign contributor to the president. ... When in history has such a company been a victim of an improvised Indian tribe? The answer is never.” The Washington Examiner (2/15) reports Rep. Greg Walden, the House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman, said the meeting was an effort to find middle ground when expanding the nation’s energy infrastructure. He welcomed both sides of the debate, and said the implications move beyond the current conflict over the Dakota Access pipeline. He said, “We want to learn from the ongoing challenges presented to us today to bring more accountability, transparency and predictability to the environmental permitting processes. ... It’s only by talking to each other, and not past each other, that we will be able to move past rhetoric and do what’s right for our communities.”

North Dakota Issues Evacuation Notice For Camp To Clean Up Before Snow Melts. The Washington Times (2/15, Richardson) reports late on Wednesday, North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum issued an emergency evacuation order for Dakota Access protesters still located in the floodplain out of concern for “injury or death” and “ecological disaster” from the melting snowpack. The evacuation order says that protesters must vacate the camp by 2 pm on February 22, the same deadline set by the US Army Corps of Engineers. The melting snow has accelerated as warmer than normal temperatures have left parts of the camp under several inches of water. The governor’s office said in a statement, “Due to these conditions, the governor’s emergency order addresses safety concerns to human life as anyone in the floodplain is at risk for possible injury or death. ... The order also addresses the need to protect the Missouri River from the waste that will flow into the Cannonball River and Lake Oahe if the camp is not cleared and the cleanup expedited.” The AP (2/15, Nicholson) reports federal and state officials announced plans to accelerate cleanup of the protest camp to ensure trash and debris left behind will not pollute waterways. Army Corps of Engineers spokesman Captain Ryan Hignight said, “With the amount of people that have been out there and the amount of estimated waste and trash out there, there is a good chance it will end up in the river if it is not cleaned up.” Morton County Emergency Manager

Tom Doering said the garbage ranges from trash to building debris to human waste, and there is enough of it to fill 2,500 pickup trucks. Gov. Burgum said that the state may start lining up additional contractors as early as Thursday.

The Hill (2/15, Henry) reports opponents of the Dakota Access pipeline are fighting against the clock as legal action is their best hope of stopping the project before oil begins to flow. Lawyers for the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe plan to file a motion this week asking a federal judge to rule on the legality of the project. Jan Hassleman, the tribe's lawyer, will ask US District Judge James Boasberg to rule on the merits of the pipeline, specifically on the question of whether the project should have gone through an environmental impact statement review before moving forward. Dakota Access lawyers say the company has complied with all necessary laws and regulation and that it cannot afford to halt construction. David Debold, a company lawyer, said, "The company is moving as quickly as it can to complete the pipeline to make up for lost time over the last couple of months. ... We're not in a position where we can agree to any stoppage of the work."

"Framing" Matters In Methane Rule Debate.

In an op-ed for the Durango (CO) Herald (2/15, Olson), Dan Olson, executive director of the San Juan Citizens Alliance, examines how the concept of "framing" applies to "the attempt by some of our elected officials to use the Congressional Review Act to undo the Bureau of Land Management Methane and Waste Prevention Rule." Rather than calling "the rule a regulation," Olson views the rule as "a community protection." According to Olson, "a rule requiring businesses to be better stewards of public resources is, to me, an important community protection." He claims that "it secures more tax and royalty revenues for our schools and infrastructure; it cleans up our air; it helps us address our climate impacts."

Renewable Energy

California Wind Energy Demand Boosts Transmission Firms.

Reuters (2/15, Groom) reports that about 5,700 miles of transmission lines are in development to bring renewable energy to California from other states, according to the Western Interstate Energy Board. Such investments are an outgrowth of California's "aggressive environmentalism" in which clean energy advocates and state officials seek wind power, but conservationists "increasingly oppose more wind farms as an environmental blight on the state's pristine desert landscape."

Tackling America's Water Challenges

BOR Announces New WaterSMART Opportunity.

WaterWorld (2/15) reports that the Bureau of Reclamation is "seeking

applications for a new WaterSMART water marketing strategy funding opportunity." The bureau is "inviting states, Indian Tribes, irrigation districts, water districts and other organizations with water or power delivery authority to cost-share with Reclamation and develop a water marketing strategy to help prevent water-related conflicts and contribute to water sustainability."

Drought Fears Ease In California.

The Los Angeles Times (2/15, Abcarian) reports that "after years of drought," California is seeing a "record amount of rain," and the pumps of the Sacramento Delta are "working overtime to fill reservoirs to the south and all over the state."

Crews Still Racing To Repair Oroville Dam Ahead Of Rainstorms.

According to ABC World News Tonight (2/15, story 5, 1:25, Muir), emergency crews are racing to reinforce the Oroville Dam's emergency spillway, bringing in 1,200 tons of material per hour, as approaching rainstorms threaten to require renewed evacuation. ABC reported that lake levels have fallen 20 feet since Sunday, resulting in areas 30 miles downstream being covered in several feet of water. Permanent repair of the structure may cost up to \$200 million.

American Rivers President: "Work With Nature, Not Against It." In a Washington Post (2/15) op-ed, American Rivers President and Chief Executive William Robert Irvin writes that the Oroville Dam emergency only emphasizes that dams and levees are neither effective nor economical ways to address flood threats. By allowing rivers "more room, not less," Irvin argues, many benefits will result: improved public safety, clean water, open recreation space, and wildlife habitat. While the immediate priority is the safety of those threatened by the Oroville Dam emergency, Irvin recommends the Administration and Congress adopt long-term infrastructure plans to "work with nature, not against it."

WSJournal: Building Up Infrastructure Should Come Before Climate Action For California. The Wall Street Journal (2/15) editorializes that California's Democrat-led government has failed to provide the state with sufficient infrastructure to deal with weather fluctuations. According to the Journal, the recent excess precipitation has pushed California's largest reservoirs to near capacity, but the state Legislature has stalled efforts to expand its surface storage for years despite it being relatively affordable compared to other projects. In addition to financing Oroville Dam repairs with state funds, Governor Jerry Brown should focus on current infrastructure needs instead of climate change predictions, writes the Journal.

Top National News

Trump Blasts "Illegally Leaked" Flynn Information, Readies "Broad Review" Of Intel Agencies.

Coverage of National Security Adviser Flynn's resignation continues to be heavy, including reports on all three network newscasts and extensive cable commentary. The focus of the story has shifted to the President's comments on the matter Wednesday, as well as to calls from lawmakers for an investigation into whether Trump campaign aides were in contact with Russian officials during last year's campaign. Trump is portrayed very unfavorably in most reports, with many deriding his criticism of the media and what he termed "illegally leaked" information on Flynn as an attempt to distract from legitimate questions about his aides' contacts with Russian officials. On [CNN's Situation Room](#) (2/15), for example, Jim Acosta said, "You can see the President is taking no responsibility for any of this. He's blaming the press." Scott Pelley, in the lead story for the [CBS Evening News](#) (2/15, lead story, 3:10, Pelley), reported Trump "lashed out...at perceived enemies," suggesting that "the FBI and the NSA are behind what he called 'illegal leaks of classified information' that led to the downfall of Michael Flynn."

[Politico](#) (2/15, Nelson), meanwhile, said that while Trump "is facing a very real threat of growing calls for investigations into numerous controversies," he is "on the offensive, blaming the media and the intelligence community for what he continues to call 'fake news.'" In a [tweet](#) Wednesday morning, Trump wrote, "The fake news media is going crazy with their conspiracy theories and blind hatred. @MSNBC & @CNN are unwatchable. @foxandfriends is great!" Trump [added](#), "This Russian connection non-sense is merely an attempt to cover-up the many mistakes made in Hillary Clinton's losing campaign," [and](#) "Information is being illegally given to the failing @nytimes & @washingtonpost by the intelligence community (NSA and FBI?). Just like Russia." The [Washington Times](#) (2/15, Sherfinski) reports that Trump [tweeted](#), "The real scandal here is that classified information is illegally given out by 'intelligence' like candy. Very un-American!"

In fact, the [New York Times](#) (2/15, Risen, Rosenberg) reports, "Administration officials" say Trump "plans to assign a New York billionaire to lead a broad review of American intelligence agencies...an effort that members of the intelligence community fear could curtail their independence and reduce the flow of information that contradicts the president's worldview." Cerberus Capital Management co-founder Stephen A. Feinberg's potential role "has met fierce resistance among intelligence officials already on edge because of the criticism the intelligence community has received from Mr. Trump during the campaign and since he became president." While there has been no announcement on the matter, Feinberg "recently told his company's shareholders that he is in discussions to join the Trump administration." [The Hill](#) (2/15, Vladimirov) also reported on Feinberg's possible position, citing the Times report.

The [Washington Times](#) (2/15, Taylor) says the Administration and the intelligence community "moved closer to open warfare in the wake of National Security Adviser Michael Flynn's spectacular downfall – and the

fallout is unnerving key American intelligence partners around the world." The Times cites a "senior Republican national security source" who said, "Our foreign partners are deeply alarmed and unsettled by what they're seeing in Washington." The Wall Street Journal (2/15, Harris, Lee) cites current and former officials who said US intelligence officials have withheld sensitive information from Trump amid concerns it might be leaked. The Journal says the decision to withhold the information highlights the level of mistrust between Trump and the intelligence community.

The New York Daily News (2/15, Joseph) says Trump "fiercely defended" Flynn and "took aim at the leaks." Lester Holt said on NBC Nightly News (2/15, story 2, 2:50, Holt) said Trump's praise for Flynn a day after he forced him out, leaves "the question whether the President would have fired him had Flynn's false statements about his dealings with a Russian official not gone public." Kristen Welker called Trump's comments "a stunning act of defiance," and cited "a source inside the White House" who acknowledges that "the episode has been a major distraction and now there are attempts to turn the page."

The AP (2/15, Pace) reports that as Flynn's resignation "sparked a new swirl of controversy over Trump's potential ties to Moscow," Trump "blamed the media and 'illegally leaked' intelligence information for" causing Flynn's downfall. Appearing to "side with his former aide," Trump said it was "really a sad thing that he was treated so badly." To the Washington Times (2/15, Boyer), Trump offered "an angry defense" of Flynn and "characterized the firing as a result of sabotaging leaks to the media, rather than dissatisfaction with Mr. Flynn's job performance."

Bloomberg Politics (2/15, Olorunnipa) quotes Trump as saying during a joint news conference with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, "He's been treated very, very unfairly by the media – as I call it, the fake media, in many cases." Reuters (2/15, Holland) says Trump called Flynn a "wonderful man." The Washington Post (2/15, Parker) notes that Trump's comments came after White House press secretary Sean Spicer on Tuesday "emphasized that Trump asked Flynn to resign because he could no longer be trusted."

According to The Hill (2/15, Fabian, Hagen), Trump "doubled down on his condemnation of the leaks from the intelligence community," saying, "It's criminal action, a criminal act and its been going a long time, before me. ... But now it's really going on." Trump added, "People are trying to cover up for a terrible loss the Democrats had under Hillary Clinton." Correspondent Chip Reid said on the CBS Evening News (2/15, story 3, 2:00, Pelley) that "Democrats, including Congressman Adam Schiff, say the focus on leaks is just a distraction." Meanwhile, the "Republican Chairman of the House Intelligence Committee says he will ask the FBI to investigate the recent rash of leaks, and, the penalty on a charge of leaking classified information is up to ten years in prison."

The New York Times (2/15, Landler) also says Trump "lashed out at the nation's intelligence agencies," blaming "illegal leaks to the news

media" for Flynn's ouster. Trump "tried to shift attention from damaging questions about contacts with Russia by Mr. Flynn and others close to the president, arguing that the outrage is not those contacts, but the leaks about them." However, the Times adds, "the White House has had little success in trying to shift the narrative from the Russian contacts to accusations about the leaking of sensitive information by the intelligence agencies, as well as by the FBI."

Jonathan Karl said in the lead story for ABC World News Tonight (2/15, lead story, 5:20, Muir) that Trump "is expressing more outrage about leaks in the newspapers than about Flynn's behavior" despite the fact that "during the presidential campaign, then-candidate Trump reveled in leaks when they were about somebody else, Hillary Clinton." The Washington Post (2/15, Parker) also says that Trump's "ire over the insider tips to journalists...contrasted with his indirect praise of the disclosure of leaked internal emails from the Clinton campaign made public by WikiLeaks during the lead-up to the election." Dana Milbank writes in his Washington Post (2/15) column that Trump has gone "from zero to Watergate in 25 days," as media outlets have revived the Nixon era question of what the President knew and when he knew it. Milbank argues, however, that this may be "the wrong question." The "real question" is "whether Flynn, in his contacts with the ambassador, was doing Trump's bidding, at least implicitly."

The New York Times (2/15, Shear) reports the President has changed his attitude from "I love WikiLeaks!" on the campaign trail to condemning the acts of those who submit information to the site as "criminal" from the White House. Trump is not the first to change his opinion against Washington's "common currency," with former President Obama having prosecuted more whistle-blowers while in office than all previous presidents combined.

Joe Scarborough said on MSNBC's Morning Joe (2/15) that it is up to congressional Republicans "to get to the bottom of this and to begin investigating. And how disheartening it was to see several people on the Hill and some editorial writers say this isn't about the Russian connections, this is about leaks." Phil Mudd said on CNN's Situation Room (2/15), "Every President comes in office and says, 'Wow, there's gambling in Vegas and people in Washington, DC leak.' The second challenge you find when you determine that you get leaks like that is not all of them come from the Department of Justice, the FBI, the NSA, people you don't like. Some have come from within your own house. In this case, the White House." Mudd added, "We have a National Security Adviser who had inappropriate conversations with the Russians and lied to his boss, and the blame goes on the National Security Agency. Are you kidding me? Happens every year, every administration...and I think this President is having a hard time accepting that."

Karl also said in the lead story for ABC World News Tonight (2/15, lead story, 5:20, Muir) that "the turmoil in the White House combined with

the National Security Council shake-up has some key Republicans in Congress worried about chaos and dysfunction in the West Wing." Sen. John McCain: "We don't know who is in charge, this Flynn situation, the whole environment is one of dysfunction in the Trump Administration."

GOP Lawmakers Alarmed About Flynn Leak; Rubio Says Intel Panel Conducting Probe. Breitbart (2/15, Wong) reported that Sen. Marco Rubio said Tuesday that the Senate Intelligence Committee will examine who wiretapped and leaked Flynn's conversation with the Russian ambassador. Said Rubio, "The Senate Select Intelligence Committee is conducting an investigation into Russia's role in our elections and its aftermath. And I imagine this among other topics will be in the purview of that." Rubio also expressed concern that "intelligence was being leaked to the press, rather than given to committees that have oversight over the intelligence agencies."

Meanwhile House Oversight Committee Chairman Jason Chaffetz said Wednesday that he has asked the Justice Department to investigate the leaks surrounding Flynn. Politico (2/15, Lima) reported that in a letter to Justice Department IG Michael Horowitz, Chaffetz "expressed concern over 'potentially classified national security information' circulated in recent news reports leading up to the resignation of the former national security adviser." Chaffetz wrote, "We have serious concerns about the potential inadequate protection of classified information here. ... In light of this, we request that your office begin an immediate investigation into whether classified information was mishandled here."

House Intelligence Committee Chairman Rep. David Nunes said on Fox News' Hannity (2/15), "There could have been multiple crimes here committed, but for sure, leaking of classified information is punishable by law. This needs to be looked into by the appropriate agencies, and in fact our committee is going to be requesting that the agencies actually look into this and try to bring these perpetrators accountable and hold them accountable under the law."

Rep. Steve King said on Fox News' Hannity (2/15), "It looks like it was a strategic plan that was unfolded and kind of synchronized that the intel that was gathered, perhaps by someone within the FBI at the time – less likely one of our other branches or components of the intelligence community – and then strategically released and leaked the information to do the maximum amount of damage to Mike Flynn."

In his Washington Times (2/15) column, Bill Gertz writes that Flynn's resignation "was the result of a coordinated effort by current and former US intelligence officials to undermine the Trump administration using the disclosure of highly classified communications intercepts." Gertz cites "a White House national security official" who said "the intelligence bureaucrats went after Mr. Flynn" because of "his plan to reform US intelligence agencies that during the Obama administration became mired in political correctness and lost much of their effectiveness." In his "Talking Points Memo" segment on Fox News' The O'Reilly Factor (2/15), Bill

O'Reilly decried what he described as "mass hysteria" over Flynn. O'Reilly argued that there is "no credible evidence that General Flynn was directed to do anything, yet the anti-Trump media spends hours talking trash."

Lawmakers Push For Investigation Of Trump-Russia Ties; Republicans Oppose Select Committee. Correspondent Jim Axelrod said on the [CBS Evening News](#) (2/15, story 2, 2:55, Pelley) that Trump "has insulted everyone from federal judges to fellow Republicans to Meryl Streep," but he has "seemed to bend over backward to avoid criticizing Vladimir Putin." Peter Wehner, who "worked for Ronald Reagan and both Bush administrations, writing speeches and generating policy ideas," says part of the reason "could be financial entanglements between Mr. Trump's real estate empire and Russia." [USA Today](#) (2/15, Dorell) provides an overview of Trump's "long-standing ties to Russia," which former US Ambassador to Ukraine and Uzbekistan John Herbst said "might explain why his policy is 'noticeably weaker on Russia than on anything else.'"

Major Garrett said in the lead story for [CBS Evening News](#) (2/15, lead story, 3:10, Pelley) that Democrats "stepped up calls for a bipartisan investigation." While "some Republicans like Tennessee's Bob Corker and South Carolina's Lindsey Graham are calling for thorough inquiries," Sen. Rand Paul "wants to defer to the Justice Department." The [Wall Street Journal](#) (2/15, Paletta, Lee) says the Administration is facing pressure from lawmakers over its contacts with Russia, with Democrats focusing on whether Flynn was freelancing when he spoke to the Russian ambassador, or acting on the orders of a superior in the Administration. [Bloomberg Politics](#) (2/15, Olorunnipa) describes "a growing sense of political peril" within the GOP and says "leading congressional Republicans on Wednesday joined calls by Democrats for a deeper look at relationships between President Trump's team and Russian government officials."

However, [Politico](#) (2/15, Bresnahan, Bade) reported that House Republicans are "downplaying calling for a select committee to investigate the matter." Nunes "reacted angrily to calls for a new probe following a New York Times bombshell report about such communications," telling Politico, "The Democrats can play their politics all they want; they're welcome to do that, this is Washington. ... But as far as I'm concerned, we will continue to investigate the Russian activity like we've done for many years." Of a select committee, Nunes said, "There is not going to be one; I can tell you there is absolutely not going to be one. And I am not going to be lectured by people who are speaking out of both sides of their mouths." House Speaker Ryan expressed a similar sentiment on [MSNBC's Morning Joe](#) (2/15), saying, "It's not as if the Intelligence Committee has not been already investigating this. They have been and will continue to do that. It's important that it is the Intelligence Committee because they are the ones that have access to classified information."

Meanwhile, [USA Today](#) (2/15, Kelly) says congressional Democrats "raced to every open microphone Wednesday to demand a broad and independent investigation." [Roll Call](#) (2/15, Bowman) reported that

Democrats "laid out their demands for independent investigations" and "are hopeful public outcry will force the administration and congressional Republicans to comply." In addition, Democrats were "united in calling on Attorney General Jeff Sessions to recuse himself from any Justice Department investigation into whether there was criminal wrongdoing." The AP (2/15, Lardner) reports that Senate Minority Leader Schumer "said Sessions should not be involved because of potential conflicts of interest and because of Justice Department regulations that prohibit individuals with political ties to the subjects of an investigation from leading it."

Schiff, a member of the House Intelligence Committee, said on CNN's Situation Room (2/15) that conversations between Trump campaign aides and Russian officials "will be a key investigation into this. There is a lot to look at. We'll look at the what the FBI response was, how they used paid media and trolls and also the issue of collusion." Schiff added that "this is something very much of interest and has to be investigated. And I think that's really one of the most serious allegations to surface since the election." Asked if he believes Trump directed Flynn to tell the Russians that his Administration would roll back sanctions, Schiff said, "I don't know is the answer. But it certainly wouldn't surprise me."

Rep. Kathleen Rice told CNN's Situation Room (2/15) that there is "no question that President Trump found out about this three weeks ago...and chose to do nothing until it became public. Now, what that says is he's interested, President Trump is interested in having a very secret administration and that's not what the public deserves."

The New York Times (2/15, Flegenheimer) reports that while Democrats "see a scandal 'bigger than Watergate,'" Republicans "see a Russia-size obstacle to conservative legislation," and the result is that "aggressive oversight on Capitol Hill of ties between President Trump's campaign associates and Russian intelligence is far from assured." Schumer said, "I've been in Congress for a long time. I've never seen anything like this. ... Nothing less than our system of checks and balances, democratic institutions and our national security is at stake." The Hill (2/15, Bolton) said Schumer "warned that Trump officials might try to cover up improper contacts with Russian intelligence." According to Schumer, "there is legitimate concern that President Trump's circle of advisers may try to destroy evidence that could shed light on the substance of reported conversations with Russian agents." Schumer "demanded that all records of contact between Trump's campaign, transition and administration officials be preserved."

The Washington Post (2/15, Demirjian, Sullivan) reports that Senate Democratic leaders agreed "to a bipartisan probe inside Congress" of the allegations, agreeing to "push forward with an ongoing Intelligence Committee investigation." This, as Senate GOP leaders "responded to Flynn's resignation by saying that the Intelligence Committee probably will examine the circumstances," a position they reiterated on Wednesday. Asked on MSNBC's Morning Joe (2/15) if there needs to be a special

committee, Senate Majority Leader McConnell said, "No. We know how to do our work and we have an Intelligence Committee. ... I don't think we need to go through setting up a special committee but we are going to look at Russia involvement and the US election."

Sen. Jeff Flake said on CNN's The Lead (2/15), "My understanding is the Senate is already looking into it, the intelligence committee. I don't think a special committee is needed. I think the standing committees can do it just fine." Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Bob Corker said on MSNBC's Morning Joe (2/15), "It's hard to know where to start. The base issue is getting to the bottom of what the Russian interference was and what the relationship was with associates of the Trump effort. So that is the big elephant in the room that has got to be dealt with in the most appropriate way. The American people need to understand, we need to understand and it needs to be dealt with quickly and we need to get it behind us."

Sen. Chris Coons said on MSNBC MTP Daily (2/15), "Initially we need to rely on the Senate Intelligence Committee which is already under way in conducting an open investigation that will be classified into materials and information that really shouldn't be reviewed in an open setting. ... I also think two committees on which I serve, Foreign Relations and Judiciary should be holding public hearings into what this means for our next election, for our relations with our vital allies in Europe who also face Russian aggression against their elections in Germany, France, and elsewhere and on Judiciary into what this means and cyber crime and for Russia's interference in our election. Then we should proceed to an independent commission and an independent investigation outside of Congress."

Senate Minority Whip Durbin was less sanguine about an Intelligence Committee probe, telling MSNBC's Morning Joe (2/15) that "the Intelligence Committee is a graveyard for investigations. Let me tell you why. Their hearings are largely in secret. The public will not have access to the testimony." Durbin added, "We are waiting for bipartisan cooperation and support for an independent commission to take on this investigation."

Sen. Chris Murphy said on MSNBC's Morning Joe (2/15), "There is a real urgency to getting to the bottom of this. Why? Because it is potentially affecting US policy. There is no theory of international relations that explains the positioning that Trump has taken on Russia." Coons added that "an independent nonpartisan commission is the only way to get to the bottom of this and give it subpoena power and allow it to do what the Republicans have been explicit that the two existing intelligence investigations are not going to do."

The Washington Post (2/15) argues in an editorial that by "dash[ing] off a half-dozen tweets in which he curiously both denied the news and attacked the leakers who disclosed it," Trump "gave more cause for Republicans and Democrats to demand answers about his opaque and increasingly troubling ties with Moscow." The Post stresses "the dire need

for a broader, bipartisan probe of Russia's election-year meddling," and says if "congressional inquiries ultimately are derailed by politics, an independent commission must be empaneled."

Also Wednesday, Sens. Chuck Grassley and Dianne Feinstein, the chairman and ranking member of the Senate Judiciary Committee asked Attorney General Sessions "to send the committee documents and provide a briefing on the resignation of President Donald Trump's national security adviser," Reuters (2/15, Zengerle) reports.

The AP (2/15, Tucker) reports that Democrats also accused the FBI of having a double standard for refusing "to discuss potential contacts between Russian officials and associates of President Donald Trump," despite its "public disclosures about Hillary Clinton's emails." Congressional Democrats and former Clinton aides "say they're upset a law enforcement organization that so publicly discussed one probe didn't even hint at the existence of another."

In an editorial, the New York Times (2/15) says there is "more than sufficient reason for Congress to investigate what Moscow has been up to and whether people at the highest levels of the United States government have aided and abetted the interests of a nation that has tried to thwart American foreign policy since the Cold War." The Times adds that while "one might expect Mr. Trump to be clamoring for details that would eliminate any suspicion that his administration is in league with an enemy," he "has waged an unhinged attack on the intelligence agencies themselves."

NYTimes Analysis: Journalists See Russia Story As A Watergate Tale For Twitter Era. Michael Grynbaum and Sydney Ember of the New York Times (2/15) write under the headline "Journalists, Battered And Groggy, Find A Renewed Sense Of Mission" that "the swirling story around President Trump's dealings with Russia is being compared in journalism circles to past blockbusters like Watergate and the Monica Lewinsky scandal – with a 21st-century twist." Major mainstream news organizations "are jousting for scoops" as the "watch the news unfold on Twitter in real time. Anonymous sources are driving bombshell stories, and leaks are springing from encrypted iPhone messaging apps rather than from meetings in underground parking garages." New Yorker editor David Remnick said, "There is this uncertainty about what is happening minute to minute, day to day. There is this sense that every day is going to bring something startling, if not calamitous." The Times writes that "the accelerated metabolism is nonpartisan," with conservative websites also "covering every twist of the White House developments."

Henninger, Dan Rather Weigh In On Watergate Similarities. In his Wall Street Journal (2/15, Henninger) column, Daniel Henninger writes that while this situation does not rise to the level of a Watergate-type threat to Trump's presidency, the goal of Trump's opponents is not impeachment but to undercut his power with the American people, which requires making him look like a loser. Henninger argues that could occur unless the

Administration can return to the basics that got them to the White House. Dan Rather took a different view of the severity of the scandal in a Facebook [post](#) that went viral on Tuesday. According to the [New York Post](#) (2/15, Mendoza), Rather wrote, "On a 10 scale of armageddon for our form of government, I would put Watergate at a 9. This Russia scandal is currently somewhere around a 5 or 6, in my opinion, but it is cascading in intensity seemingly by the hour." Rather also "slammed the White House's credibility," writing, "The White House has no credibility on this issue. Their spigot of lies – can't we finally all agree to call them lies – long ago lost them any semblance of credibility. I would also extend that to the Republican Congress, who has excused away the Trump Administration's assertions for far too long."

Flynn's Security Clearance Suspended. CNN has reported that Flynn's security clearance has been suspended, [The Hill](#) (2/15, Hensch) reported. A spokesman for the DIA that "the suspension is a normal administrative move for clearances under 'pending review.'" According to the spokesman, the clearance "could be reinstated if no wrongdoing is found." Meanwhile, Pamela Brown reported on [CNN's Anderson Cooper 360](#) (2/15) that "the FBI is not suspected to pursue charges against" Flynn. However, "there is still an ongoing broader FBI review of Flynn, and other Trump campaign aides on their Russia-related dealings."

In a separate story for [ABC World News Tonight](#) (2/15, story 2, 2:35, Muir), Senior Justice Correspondent Pierre Thomas said an "intensive investigation [is] under way." So far "FBI and intelligence officials have found no direct cooperation between Trump associates and the Russian government aimed at influencing the 2016 election, and authorities cannot yet say for certain if Trump associates knew they were dealing with suspected Russian intelligence, who often pose as business, political, and academic leaders. And even if they didn't know, many asking, why so much contact with the Russians before an American election at all?"

Trump Offers NSA Job To Harward. [Reuters](#) (2/15, Hosenball, Walcott) reports that President Trump has offered the job of national security adviser to Vice Admiral Robert Harward, according to "two US officials familiar with the matter." Sources say it was not clear whether Harward had accepted the offer. [Foreign Policy](#) (2/15, Ricks) said Harward "is likely to bring in his own team, from deputy on down, with a focus on national security types with some experience under their belts."

Figure In Russian Cyber-Treason Scandal Linked To Underground Criminal Web Forums. [McClatchy](#) (2/15, Johnson) reports that Dmitry Dokuchaev, who is "one of the key figures in a cyber-treason scandal shaking Russia and possibly related to Russian efforts to influence the US presidential election has been linked to underground criminal forums on the web." Dokuchaev, a major in Russia's FSB security service and its Information Security Center, "used the screen name 'Forb' when he mingled with the large underground community of Russian-speaking criminals who use the so-called dark web to trade tools for defrauding

consumers in the West." His activities "have potential significance to congressional inquiries into President Donald Trump's ties to Russia."

US No Longer Advocating Two-State Solution To Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.

Media coverage reflected unfavorably on the President's remarks on Middle East peace during a joint press conference Wednesday with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, casting them as a break with US policy in the region. Outlets say the President backed away from US support for a two-state solution – a move that was immediately criticized by the Palestinians and the UN Secretary-General.

[ABC World News Tonight](#) (2/15, story 4, 2:10, Muir) said the President made "controversial statements on the search for peace in the Middle East...breaking with longstanding US policy on a two-state solution." Margaret Brennan said on the [CBS Evening News](#) (2/15, story 4, 1:30, Pelley) that the President "broke with two decades of US policy today, saying he would not insist on a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict." The [Wall Street Journal](#) (2/15, Paletta, Lee) quotes the President as saying, "I'm looking at two-state and one-state and I like the one that both parties like. I'm very happy with the one that both parties like. I can live with either one."

The [Washington Times](#) (2/15, Miller) calls the remarks a "jarring deviation from the longtime US position that the creation of a separate Palestinian state was fundamental to a Middle East peace deal." The [AP](#) (2/15, Salama) reports Trump is "charting a striking new course for the Middle East" by withholding "clear support for an independent Palestine," and the [New York Times](#) (2/15, Baker, Landler) says the comments "were a striking departure from two decades of diplomatic orthodoxy, and they raised a host of thorny questions about the viability of his position." The Palestinians are "highly unlikely to accept anything short" of statehood, and "a single Israeli state encompassing the Palestinians" would become "either become undemocratic or no longer Jewish, given the faster growth rate of the Arab population." But the President "did not address these dynamics, preferring to focus on his confidence that he could" – in his own words – "make a deal" that "might be a better and better deal than people in this room even understand."

Not everyone agreed with this line of analysis. Sen. Jeff Flake said on [CNN's The Lead](#) (2/15), "My take is with regard to the two or one-state solution, President Trump seemed to be simply saying that they will accept whatever the parties negotiate and those parties are Israel and Palestinians. That's been the long-held position that the United States has had. So, I don't think that that's a break from the past."

Calling his remarks a "significant departure from past US policy," meanwhile, the [Washington Post](#) (2/15, A1, Gearan, Eglash) says Trump "confidently predicted that he can help broker an end to the decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and started the negotiations immediately."

Speaking to reporters, Trump said, "I would like to see a deal be made. I think a deal will be made. I know that every president would like to. Most of them have not started until late, because they never thought it was possible, and it wasn't possible because they didn't do it." The Post notes he have "no timetable...but suggested it will come soon."

Reuters (2/15, Baker, Spetalnick) likewise says Trump "offered no new prescription for achieving an accord that has eluded so many of his predecessors." He also "dropp[ed] a bombshell on Netanyahu as they faced reporters," saying, "I'd like to see you pull back on settlements for a little bit." On NBC Nightly News (2/15, story 3, 2:35, Holt), Andrea Mitchell also said the President dropped a "bombshell...on Netanyahu," who "gave no commitments." Bloomberg Politics (2/15, Talev) too said Netanyahu was "noncommittal," and USA Today (2/15, Korte, Jackson) says he "downplayed the significance of the issue." AFP (2/15) says the Israeli leader, however, "hammered home his own prerequisites for peace," saying, "First, the Palestinians must recognize the Jewish state. They have to stop calling for Israel's destruction. Second, in any peace agreement, Israel must retain the overriding security control over the entire area west of the Jordan River."

A Los Angeles Times (2/15) editorial says the President "casually demolished a pillar of US foreign policy under both Democratic and Republican administrations," claiming "to know better." On its editorial page, the Washington Post (2/15) similarly says Trump "signaled a dangerous retreat from the Middle East policy that Republican as well as Democratic presidents have pursued for the past two decades." The Post says that "to his credit, Mr. Trump did seek to check Mr. Netanyahu in one area: settlements." If he "really wants to broker a deal," the Post argues that "he should start by pressing Mr. Netanyahu for such a commitment."

Responding to Trump's remarks, the Washington Post (2/15, Booth) reports, Palestinian officials "pleaded with the White House...not to abandon the two-state solution." The Palestinian leadership "appeared stunned" that an Administration official told reporters in Washington late Tuesday that the White House was open to a new approach that does not emphasize two states. The New York Times (2/15, Fisher) likewise says Palestinians "reacted with anger and bafflement" after Trump's remarks. Chief negotiator Saeb Erekat raised the specter of "apartheid" and called for "concrete measures in order to save the two-state solution."

Reuters (2/15) reports UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres also warned against abandoning the idea of a two-state solution, saying there was "no alternative." During a visit to Cairo, the UN chief said, "There is no alternative solution for the situation between the Palestinians and Israelis, other than the solution of establishing two states, and we should do all that can be done to maintain this." An AP (2/15, Perry) analysis similarly says the "alternatives are few, and each comes with daunting and combustible complications, including for Israel itself."

Netanyahu: Trump Right Leader To Defeat Radical Islam. The Washington

Times (2/15, Miller) reports that at yesterday's press conference, Netanyahu "said President Trump was the right leader to defeat radical Islamic terrorism." Said the Israeli leader, "Under your leadership I believe we can reverse the rising tide of radical Islam." He also commended Trump for showing "great courage in confronting this threat head-on."

Trump Called Only On Conservative Outlets During Press Conference.

Politico (2/15, Gold) reports in its "On Media" blog that the President on Wednesday "continued his streak of calling only on conservative-leaning outlets" during his press conferences with Netanyahu. Trump called on David Brody of the Christian Broadcasting Network and Katie Pavlich, the editor of TownHall.com. Politico says the result of his "selection of questioners was that some of the most urgent questions of the day continued to go unanswered," including former National Security Advisor Flynn's contacts with Russia.

David Nakamura of the Washington Post (2/15), meanwhile, considers the differences in news conferences between the previous and current presidents, writing that they used to be "a chance to hear from Professor Obama, the long-winded lecturer in chief who expounded on domestic politics and international relations with nuance, depth, range and, most of all, a lot of words." Under President Trump, "joint news conferences with foreign leaders are brisker affairs. He is not interested in filibustering answers to run out the clock, the way Obama did, but prefers racing through them in a mix of simplistic declarative sentences, ad-libs and non sequiturs."

First Lady Visits African American History Museum With Sara Netanyahu.

The AP (2/15) reports that the First Lady visited the National Museum of African American History and Culture with Sara Netanyahu on Wednesday. They "were led on a tour by David Skorton, secretary of the Smithsonian, and Lonnie Bunch, the museum's founding director." The Hill (2/15, Shelbourne) reports that the two "reportedly spent several minutes on the last stop of the tour, which was in the room with a waterfall that features quotes on the wall from figures such as Nelson Mandela and poet Frances Harper."

The Daily Mail (2/15, Spargo) reports that before the museum visit, the First Lady "greeted her guests with a kiss and the group exchanged pleasantries while posing for some photos before going inside for the President and Prime Minister's news conference. Once inside, Melania sat next to Ivanka, who attended the early afternoon event with her husband, Jared Kushner." Us Weekly (2/15, Chen) reports that it was Melania Trump's "first official White House appearance" since the inauguration. Vogue (2/15, Barsamian) and Women's Wear Daily (2/15, Feitelberg) report that the First Lady wore an exclusive Karl Lagerfeld outfit.

CNN (2/15, Bennett) reports on its website that the First Lady "has interacted with Sara Netanyahu before, as recently as November, when the Prime Minister posted on his Facebook page details of a call between his wife and the then-first lady-elect."

Tillerson's Absence During Trump's Meetings With Foreign Leaders

Noted. The New York Times (2/15, Harris) reports that Secretary of State Tillerson was "conspicuously absent" during Trump's meeting with Netanyahu. Tillerson, it notes, "also missed two other important occasions in Washington this week: a lunch with Russia's ambassador and Mr. Trump's meetings with the prime minister of Canada." Instead, Tillerson relied on acting Deputy Secretary Thomas A. Shannon Jr., "a holdover from the Obama administration, to be his stand-in for the meetings this week."

Pompeo, Abbas Hold Talks In West Bank. The CBS Evening News (2/15, story 4, 1:30, Pelley) reported CIA Director Pompeo "met secretly" with the Palestinians "for the first time." According to the AP (2/15, Laub), Pompeo and President Mahmoud Abbas "met secretly...in the West Bank" on Tuesday, Palestinian officials said. The White House and the CIA "declined comment" on the meeting.

McClatchy Analysis: Kushner To Fill Void Left By Flynn's Departure.

McClatchy (2/15, Ordoñez, Hall) reports this week's "sudden resignation" of National Security Adviser Flynn has left "a leadership void on Middle East issues that President Donald Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, looks poised to fill."

Former Ambassadors: Friedman "Unqualified" To Serve As Ambassador.

The AP (2/15, Lardner) reports that five former US ambassadors to Israel said Wednesday that President Trump's nominee for the post, David Friedman, "is unqualified and are urging senators to carefully consider his nomination." In a letter sent to members of the Foreign Relations Committee, the former diplomats said Friedman has staked out "extreme, radical positions" and has derided the two-state solution as an "illusory" fix. "We believe the committee should satisfy itself that Mr. Friedman has the balance and the temperament required to represent the United States as ambassador to Israel," they wrote. In an interview with NBC Nightly News (2/15, story 4, 2:10, Holt), founder of the Beit El settlement in the West Bank and Prime Minister Netanyahu's brother-in-law, Hagi Ben-Artzi, said, "There was no President who appointed an ambassador to Israel who is a real supporter of the settlements, never." NBC noted that Friedman has helped raise "millions" for Beit El.

Fatah Selects New Deputy Leader. Reuters (2/15, Sawafta, Al-Mughrabi) reports Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah party on Wednesday chose a deputy leader, "but it was unclear whether Mahmoud Al-Aloul would also be favorite to succeed him as president." Aloul, a "close Abbas confidant," is the first deputy leader appointed since Fatah's founding in the 1960s.

Puzder, Facing Defeat In Senate, Withdraws As Labor Secretary Nominee.

Media analyses indicate that Andrew Puzder decided to withdraw his nomination for labor secretary as he realized Republican defections would likely cause him to go down to defeat. Reports also state that it was

Puzder's alleged personal behavior, and not his statements on labor issues, that cost him that GOP support. Many print reports are relatively brief, though all three broadcast networks ran somewhat detailed stories – and [NBC Nightly News](#) (2/15, lead story, 2:15, Holt) opened with it, referring to “a blow” to the White House. NBC's Peter Alexander added that “for Puzder, the last straw may have been footage provided to the senators...where Puzder's ex-wife appeared in disguise, describing allegations of domestic abuse. ... Puzder always denied the allegations.” In addition, Alexander reported that “his controversial nomination had already spawned protests...with the multimillionaire facing scrutiny for his criticism of the minimum wage laws, past employment of an undocumented immigrant as a housekeeper, and racy commercials...that critics blasted as sexist.”

[ABC World News Tonight](#) (2/15, story 3, 2:20, Muir) reported, “After the firing of the national security adviser, a controversial Cabinet pick pulling his name,” with Puzder “bowing out after scrutiny including his ex-wife on the Oprah Winfrey show talking about domestic abuse.” ABC's Mary Bruce added that Puzder has “been accused of disparaging workers, once suggesting he prefers robots to human labor, saying, ‘They're always polite, they always upsell, they never take a vacation.’ Also taking aim at his own fast food employees.” Puzder: “My first memo was no more people behind the counter unless they have all of their teeth.” On the [CBS Evening News](#) (2/15, story 6, 1:30), Scott Pelley said, “President Trump's choice for labor secretary created a job today for someone else.”

On [CNN's The Lead](#) (2/15), Manu Raju cited a source who said “there were four firm no votes on the Republican side, and up to 11 no votes on the Republican side as well. So that means that Puzder's chances of confirmation were incredibly slim.” Phil Mattingly said on [CNN's Anderson Cooper 360](#) (2/15), “Over the course of the last 48 hours, I've talked to multiple Republican senators, and almost every single one had a different issue. There was the reality that he at one point employed an undocumented worker. There were his personal views on immigration reform. There was also allegations from an ex-wife about domestic abuse.”

[USA Today](#) (2/15, Collins) reports, “Puzder's critics have said labor practices at his restaurants and his opposition to raising the minimum wage and expanding overtime eligibility should disqualify him.” They also “blasted comments he has made about his workers. He once described his restaurant employees as ‘the best of the worst.’” [The Hill](#) (2/15, Wheeler) reports that Puzder said in a statement, “After careful consideration and discussions with my family, I am withdrawing my nomination for secretary of labor. I am honored to have been considered by President Donald Trump to lead the Department of Labor and put America's workers and businesses back on a path to sustainable prosperity. ... While I won't be serving in the Administration, I fully support the President and his highly qualified team.”

The [AP](#) (2/15, Kellman, Lucey) reports that White House press secretary Sean Spicer “said he had no information on any possible

replacement," and Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Chairman Lamar Alexander, "who would have chaired Puzder's confirmation hearing Thursday, issued a terse statement saying the nominee would have made an 'excellent' labor secretary, but 'I respect his decision.'" The AP says the Puzder nomination "became part of a streak of contentious confirmation battles and haphazard White House actions."

Bloomberg Politics (2/15, Dopp, Eidelson) says that at least four Republicans were ready to vote against Puzder, which would have all but ensured his defeat. The Washington Post (2/15, O'Keefe, Marte) reports that Senate Majority Leader McConnell had informed the White House that Puzder lacked the votes for confirmation. The New York Times (2/15, Rappeport) says in a brief report that Democrats "claimed victory." McClatchy (2/15, Hotakainen) called it "a rare win for Senate Democrats." Charles Krauthammer said on Fox News Special Report (2/15), "It was a pretty easy call in the end. Too heavy a lift for too small a payoff."

The Washington Post (2/15, Weigel) reports that union leaders were "celebrating" Puzder's withdrawal. AFSCME President Lee Saunders said Puzder "had 'nothing but contempt for everything the Labor Department stands for.' AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka said 'the power of collective action' had taken Puzder down." The Washington Times (2/15, McLaughlin) reports that former Labor Secretary Tom Perez, now the leading candidate to chair the Democratic National Committee, told reporters, "It is hard to imagine someone worse than Andy Puzder. Maybe they will understand that you ought to vet your nominees before you nominate them."

The Los Angeles Times (2/15, Puzanghera, Mascaro) says Puzder's "decision to pull out was triggered by concerns from a growing number of Senate Republicans about decades-old allegations of spousal abuse and an admission that he had employed a housekeeper who was in the US illegally." The New York Post (2/15, Moore) headlines its report "Puzder Withdraws Nomination Due To Lack Of Senate Support." In an editorial, the Los Angeles Times (2/15) says "the terrible" Puzder "did the right thing" by withdrawing.

Sarah Baker, who led the vetting team in the Office of the White House Counsel for much of President Obama's second term, writes in a USA Today (2/15) op-ed that Puzder survived longer than she would have expected: "He did not just have professional problems. He did not just have financial problems. He did not just have personal problems. He had significant professional, financial and personal problems."

Timothy Noah of Politico (2/15) writes a piece titled "How Puzder Fell" in which he notes that Steve Bannon and Stephen Miller, "two of the most powerful voices in President Donald Trump's inner circle, were never strongly behind" Puzder, "believing he was too soft on immigration." The Wall Street Journal (2/15) says in an editorial titled "Another Trump Casualty" that unions and the media were able to bring down Puzder because President Trump was distracted and his West Wing divided. The Washington Times (2/15, Dinan) and Roll Call (2/15) also cover Puzder's

withdrawal in similar reports.

Editorial Wrap-Up

New York Times.

"Time For Congress To Investigate Mr. Trump's Ties To Russia." In an editorial, the New York Times (2/15) says there is "more than sufficient reason for Congress to investigate what Moscow has been up to and whether people at the highest levels of the United States government have aided and abetted the interests of a nation that has tried to thwart American foreign policy since the Cold War." The Times adds that while "one might expect [President] Trump to be clamoring for details that would eliminate any suspicion that his administration is in league with an enemy," he "has waged an unhinged attack on the intelligence agencies themselves."

"Congress Says Let The Mentally Ill Buy Guns." In an editorial, the New York Times (2/15) says Republicans "have managed to act with lightning speed" to strike down the "sensible Obama administration rule." President Trump is expected to sign the regressive measure "despite the Republican mantra that tighter control of mentally troubled individuals – not stronger gun control – is the better way to deal with the mass shootings and gun carnage that regularly afflict the nation."

"Inching Toward A One-State Solution?" The New York Times (2/15) in an editorial says that President Trump on Wednesday "dangerously backed away from the two-state solution," though it is "the only just answer to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict." Trump "voiced optimism" but "offered no details" and "has no inkling of how to move forward." The Times concludes that "there is less reason than ever to believe that he can succeed where so many other presidents have failed."

Washington Post.

"The Nation Needs Answers, Not Deflections, On Russia And Trump." The Washington Post (2/15) argues in an editorial that by "dash[ing] off a half-dozen tweets in which he curiously both denied the news and attacked the leakers who disclosed it," President Trump "gave more cause for Republicans and Democrats to demand answers about his opaque and increasingly troubling ties with Moscow." The Post stresses "the dire need for a broader, bipartisan probe of Russia's election-year meddling," and says if "congressional inquiries ultimately are derailed by politics, an independent commission must be empaneled."

"The President Makes A Dubious Shift On Israel." On its editorial page, the Washington Post (2/15) says President Trump "signaled a dangerous retreat from the Middle East policy that Republican as well as Democratic presidents have pursued for the past two decades." The Post says that "to his credit, Mr. Trump did seek to check Mr. Netanyahu in one area: settlements." If he "really wants to broker a deal," the Post argues that "he should start by pressing Mr. Netanyahu for such a commitment."

“Is Fear The Trump Administration’s Immigration Enforcement Goal?”

The Washington Post (2/15) in an editorial says that President Trump has approved deportation of “virtually any undocumented immigrant charged with a crime or even suspected of having broken a law.” ICE recently arrested “more than 600 undocumented immigrants” in actions “not dissimilar to raids undertaken during the Obama administration,” but “they unleashed a wave of anxiety in immigrant communities.” The Post says it is a “sensible policy to target undocumented immigrants who are convicted felons, especially repeat offenders” but “it is hard to imagine what purpose is served by focusing on immigrants with clean records” apart from “instilling terror in immigrant communities.”

Wall Street Journal.

“Another Trump Casualty.” The Wall Street Journal (2/15) says in an editorial that unions and the media were able to bring down Labor Secretary nominee Andrew Puzder because President Trump was distracted and his West Wing divided. The

“California’s Climate Change.” The Wall Street Journal (2/15) editorializes that California’s Democrat-led government has failed to provide the state with sufficient infrastructure to deal with weather fluctuations. According to the Journal, the recent excess precipitation has pushed California’s largest reservoirs to near capacity, but the state Legislature has stalled efforts to expand its surface storage for years despite their cost being relatively affordable compared to other projects. In addition to financing Oroville Dam repairs with state funds, Governor Jerry Brown should focus on current infrastructure needs instead of climate change predictions, writes the Journal.

“Liberals Matriculate At Calhoun College.” In an editorial, the Wall Street Journal (2/15) writes that Yale’s announcement that it will rename Calhoun College comes at an awkward time – as progressive actions to undermine the Administration’s policy agenda would seem to embrace John C. Calhoun’s argument. Calhoun advocated a minority’s ability to veto the will of a “numerical majority.” According to the Journal, this sentiment is evident in actions by many cities and states that have expressed their will against or enacted measures that defy federal policies.

Big Picture**Headlines From Today’s Front Pages.*****Wall Street Journal:***

Spies Keep Trump In Dark On Intelligence In Sign Of Mistrust
Andy Puzder, Donald Trump’s Labor Pick, Withdraws
Trump Drops Push For Two-State Solution In Mideast
Data Signal Solid Momentum For US Economy

New York Times:

Trump, Meeting With Netanyahu, Backs Away From Palestinian State

[White House Plans To Have Trump Ally Review Intelligence Agencies After Election, Trump's Professed Love For Leaks Quickly Faded](#)
[Andrew Puzder Withdraws From Consideration As Labor Secretary](#)
[White House Proposes New Rules To Steady Insurance Markets Under Health Law](#)
[Legacy Of Rio Olympics So Far Is Series Of Unkept Promises](#)

Washington Post:

[The Lurid Tale Of A North Korean Family Feud](#)
[Career Pivot Is Ultimate Test Of Self-reinvention](#)
[Labor Nominee Is Trump's First Cabinet Defeat](#)
[Congress Reasserts Itself Amid Flynn Saga](#)
[Trump Pulls Back From Two-State Plan](#)

Financial Times:

[Iran Calls For Truce In Yemen](#)
[Trump Levels Dirty Tricks Charge Against US Intelligence](#)
[Hizbollah Boosted By Syria Battleground Successes](#)
[Anger In Berlin Over GM Plans To Sell Opel To Peugeot](#)

Washington Times:

[Trump Spy Clash Spooks Intelligence Allies Abroad](#)
[Trump Hits US Intel For Classified Leaks, Causing Flynn's Downfall](#)
[Immigrant Group Discourages Illegals From Signing Up For Obama's Deportation Amnesty](#)
[Russian Military Provocations Testing New Administration](#)
[Trump Brings "Art Of The Deal" To Middle East Peace Negotiations](#)
[Puzder Out As Labor Secretary Pick; First Trump Nominee To Stumble](#)

Story Lineup From Last Night's Network News:

ABC: Trump-Russia Controversy; Russia Controversy Investigation; Labor Secretary Nominee Withdraws; Israeli Prime Minister Visit; Oroville Dam Emergency; American Airlines Emergency Landing; Immigration Crackdown; Kim Jung-Nam Assassination; Yosemite Sight; Sriracha Hot Sauce.

CBS: Trump-Russia Controversy; Russia Controversy Investigation; Intelligence Leaks; Israeli Prime Minister Visit; SPEC-OPS General Comment; Labor Secretary Nominee Withdraws; Anti-Trump Protesters; Rising Traffic Death; Health-Autism Detection; Obamacare Under Fire; Climate Change.

NBC: Labor Secretary Nominee Withdraws; Trump-Russia Controversy; Israeli Prime Minister Visit; Israel West Bank; Russian Military Aggression; Chicago Shooting Child Death; Kim Jung-Nam Assassination; Health-Autism Detection; Immigration Protest; Boy Doll; Dog Show; High School Team Mascot.

Network TV At A Glance:

Trump-Russia Controversy – 11 minutes, 20 seconds
 Israeli Prime Minister Visit – 6 minutes, 15 seconds
 Russia Controversy Investigation – 5 minutes, 30 seconds
 Labor Secretary Nominee Withdraws – 4 minutes, 35 seconds
 Health-Autism Detection – 2 minutes, 20 seconds
 Kim Jung-Nam Assassination – 45 seconds

Story Lineup From This Morning's Radio News Broadcasts:

ABC: Labor Secretary Nominee Withdraws; Flynn Controversy; Immigration Crackdown.

CBS: Flynn Controversy; Israeli Prime Minister Visit; Labor Secretary Nominee Withdraws; Boeing Unionization Fails; Oroville Dam Emergency.

FOX: Flynn Controversy; Labor Secretary Nominee Withdraws; Israeli Prime Minister Visit.

NPR: Israeli Prime Minister Visit; Labor Secretary Nominee Withdraws; Gun Control; Oroville Dam Emergency; Food Expiration Label; Kim Jung-Nam Assassination; Indonesia Earthquake.

Washington Schedule

Today's Events In Washington.

White House:

PRESIDENT TRUMP Participates in a Congressional listening session; speaks with President Beji Caid Essebsi of Tunisia by telephone; meets with the Attorney General, Jeff Sessions; signs H.J. Res. 38.

VICE PRESIDENT PENCE Hosts a breakfast meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu; joins the President to participate in a Congressional listening session; joins the President as he signs H.J. Res. 38; hosts an African American economic opportunity listening session.

US Senate: 9:30 AM Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on 'reshaping the military' – Hearing on 'Reshaping the U.S. Military', with testimony from RAND Corporation Senior Defense Research Analyst David Ochmanek; The Telemus Group Principal James Thomas; American Enterprise Institute Marilyn Ware Center for Security Studies Co-Director Thomas Donnelly; and Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments Bryan Clark Location: Rm G50, Dirksen Senate Office Bldg, Washington, DC <http://armed-services.senate.gov/>

10:00 AM Senate HELP Committee considers Andrew Puzder to be labor secretary – Nominations hearing considers Andrew Puzder to be Secretary of Labor * Then-President-elect Donald Trump announced the nomination of the businessman in December Location: Rm 430, Dirksen Senate Office Bldg, Washington, DC <http://help.senate.gov/>

10:00 AM LULAC Advocacy Day on Capitol Hill – League of United Latin American Citizens Advocacy Day on Capitol Hill, as part of the Emerge Latino Conference, with meetings with legislators and the Capitol Hill Power Luncheon Location: U.S. Capitol, Washington, DC www.lulac.org <https://twitter.com/LULAC>

10:00 AM Senate Finance Committee considers Seema Verma to be CMS administrator – Nominations hearing considers Seema Verma to be Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Administrator * Then-President-elect Donald Trump announced the nomination of the health policy consultant in November Location: Rm 215, Dirksen Senate Office Bldg, Washington, DC <http://finance.senate.gov>

10:30 AM Nominations hearing considers David Friedman to be U.S. Ambassador to Israel Location: Rm 419, Dirksen Senate Office Bldg, Washington, DC <http://foreign.senate.gov/>

10:30 AM Senate Transportation subcommittee hearing on improving the TSA – Aviation Operations, Safety, and Security Subcommittee hearing on 'Stakeholder Perspectives on Improving TSA for the Security of the Traveling Public', with testimony from Cargo Airline Association President Stephen Alterman; Airlines for America Senior Vice President of Legislative and Regulatory Policy Sharon Pinkerton; Denver International Airport CEO Kim Day; and Analogic Vice President of Global Business Development and Government Relations Mark Laustra Location: Rm 253, Russell Senate Office Bldg, Washington, DC <http://commerce.senate.gov>

12:00 PM Dem Sen. Bob Casey meets SCOTUS nominee Neil Gorsuch – Democratic Sen. Bob Casey meets U.S. Supreme Court nominee Neil Gorsuch to discuss his background and nomination Location: Rm 393 Russell Senate Office Bldg, Washington, DC <http://casey.senate.gov/>
<https://twitter.com/SenBobCasey>

2:45 PM Garry Kasparov testifies to Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee hearing on democracy and human rights – Western Hemisphere, Transnational Crime, Civilian Security, Democracy, Human Rights, and Global Women's Issues Subcommittee hearing on 'Democracy and Human Rights: The Case for U.S. Leadership', with testimony from Human Rights Foundation Chairman Garry Kasparov; National Endowment for Democracy President Carl Gershman; International Republican Institute President Mark Green; National Democratic Institute President Kenneth Wollack; human rights activist Dr Halah Eldoseri; and Cuban artist and human rights activist El Sexto (aka Danilo Maldonado Machado) Location: Rm 419, Dirksen Senate Office Bldg, Washington, DC
<http://foreign.senate.gov/>

3:45 PM Republican Sen. Chuck Grassley meets Iowa Secretary of State Paul Pate Location: U.S. Capitol, Washington, DC
<http://grassley.senate.gov/public/> <https://twitter.com/ChuckGrassley>

US House: 9:00 AM House Armed Services subcommittee hearing on fifth generation tactical aircraft – Tactical Air and Land Forces Subcommittee hearing on 'Military Services 5th Generation Tactical Aircraft Challenges and F-35 Joint Strike Fighter Program Update', with testimony from U.S. Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff for Strategic Plans, Programs, Requirements Lt. Gen. Jerry Harris, Jr., and F-35 Joint Program Office Program Executive Officer Lt. Gen. Chris Bogdan; U.S. Navy Director of Air Warfare Rear Adm. Chip Miller III; and U.S. Marine Corps Deputy Commandant For Aviation Lt.

Gen. Jon Davis Location: Rm 2212, Rayburn House Office Bldg,
Washington, DC www.armedservices.house.gov
<https://twitter.com/HASCRpublicans>

9:30 AM House Appropriations subcommittee 'Members' Day' hearing
– Military Construction, Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies
Subcommittee 'Members' Day' hearing, with testimony from bipartisan
Reps. Amata Radewagen, Emanuel Cleaver, Frank LoBiondo, Colleen
Hanabusa, and Roger Williams Location: HT-2, U.S. Capitol, Washington,
DC <http://appropriations.house.gov/>
<https://twitter.com/HouseAppropsGOP>

10:00 AM Senate Rules and Administration business meeting –
Organizational business meeting to consider committee rules, an original
resolution authorizing expenditures by the Committee during the 115th
Congress, and the omnibus budget resolution for Senate Committees.
Location: 301 Russell

10:00 AM House Homeland Security subcommittee hearing on threats
from cartels – Border and Maritime Security Subcommittee hearing on 'A
Dangerous and Sophisticated Adversary: The Threat to the Homeland
Posed by Cartel Operations', with testimony from U.S. Coast Guard Deputy
Commandant for Operations Vice Adm. Charles Ray; Department of
Homeland Security Homeland Security Investigations Assistant Director for
Investigative Programs Matt Allen, and Joint Task Force-West Commander
Paul Beeson; and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for
International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs Luis Arreaga Location:
CVC 210, U.S. Capitol, Washington, DC homeland.house.gov
<https://twitter.com/HouseHomeland>

10:00 AM House Agriculture Committee Business Meeting, hearing on
food stamps – Business Meeting, to consider 'H.R. XX, The Pesticide
Registration Enhancement Act of 2017' and 'H.R. 953, Reducing Regulatory
Burdens Act of 2017' * Immediately followed by hearing on 'Pros and Cons
of Restricting SNAP Purchases' Location: Rm 1300, Longworth House Office
Bldg, Washington, DC <http://agriculture.house.gov/>

10:00 AM LULAC Advocacy Day on Capitol Hill – League of United
Latin American Citizens Advocacy Day on Capitol Hill, as part of the
Emerge Latino Conference, with meetings with legislators and the Capitol
Hill Power Luncheon Location: U.S. Capitol, Washington, DC www.lulac.org
<https://twitter.com/LULAC>

10:00 AM House Space Committee hearing on NASA – Hearing on
'NASA: Past, Present, and Future', with testimony from former astronaut /
former Sen. Harrison Schmitt; former astronaut Thomas Stafford; former
NASA Chief Scientist Dr Ellen Stofan; and former Goddard Spaceflight
Center Director Tom Young Location: Rm 2318, Rayburn House Office Bldg,
Washington, DC <http://science.house.gov>
<https://twitter.com/HouseScience>

10:00 AM House Energy subcommittee hearing on modernizing
environmental laws – Environment Subcommittee hearing on 'Modernizing

Environmental Laws: Challenges and Opportunities for Expanding Infrastructure and Promoting Development and Manufacturing', with testimony from National Association of Manufacturers Vice President for Energy and Resources Policy Ross Eisenberg; George Washington University Law School Professor Emily Hammond (on behalf of Center for Progressive Reform); Water You fighting For? founder Melissa Mays; New Bradford, MA, Mayor Jonathan Mitchell; U.S. Chamber of Commerce Vice President for Small Business Policy Thomas Sullivan; and Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry Director of Government Affairs Kevin Sunday Location: Rm 2123, Rayburn House Office Bldg, Washington, DC <http://energycommerce.house.gov/> <https://twitter.com/HouseCommerce>

10:00 AM House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing on Iran – Hearing on 'Iran on Notice', with testimony from The Rapidan Group Managing Director Scott Modell; The Washington Institute for Near East Policy Fellow Katherine Bauer; Institute for Science and International Security founder and President David Albright; and The Atlantic Contributing Editor Dr Andrew Exum * Earlier this month, then-National Security Adviser Michael Flynn – in his first public statement since taking office – responded to an Iranian missile test by saying the U.S. was 'officially putting Iran on notice' Location: Rm 2172, Rayburn House Office Bldg, Washington, DC <http://www.hcfa.house.gov> <https://twitter.com/HFACrepublicans>

10:00 AM House Workforce subcommittee hearing on federal wage and hour policies – Workforce Protections Subcommittee hearing on 'Federal Wage and Hour Policies in the Twenty-First Century Economy', with testimony from College and University Professional Association for Human Resources President and CEO Andy Brantley; Rhea Lana's Franchise Systems President Rhea Lana Riner (on behalf of International Franchise Association); The Century Foundation Senior Fellow Andrew Stettner; and FiveL Company sole proprietor Christine Walters (on behalf of Society for Human Resource Management) Location: Rm 2175, Rayburn House Office Bldg, Washington, DC <http://edworkforce.house.gov/> <https://twitter.com/EdWorkforce>

10:00 AM House Financial Services subcommittee hearing on the U.S.-EU covered agreement – Housing and Insurance Subcommittee hearing on 'Assessing the U.S.-EU Covered Agreement', with testimony from Wisconsin Commissioner of Insurance Ted Nickel (on behalf of National Association of Insurance Commissioners); National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies President and CEO Charles Chamness; American Insurance Association President and CEO Leigh Ann Pusey; and former Federal Insurance Office Director Michael McRaith Location: Rm 2128, Rayburn House Office Bldg, Washington, DC <http://financialservices.house.gov> <https://twitter.com/FinancialCmte>

10:00 AM House Judiciary subcommittee hearing on the Competitive Health Insurance Reform Act – Regulatory Reform, Commercial and Antitrust Law Subcommittee hearing on 'H.R. 372, the Competitive Health Insurance Reform Act of 2017', with testimony from Republican Reps. Paul

Gosar and Austin Scott; American Enterprise Institute Resident Fellow Thomas Miller; David A. Balto Law Offices Principal David Balto; Property Casualty Insurers Association of America Vice President for Policy Robert Woody; and Consumer Union Senior Policy Counsel George Slover
 Location: Rm 2141, Rayburn House Office Bldg, Washington, DC
<http://judiciary.house.gov/> <https://twitter.com/HouseJudiciary>

10:45 AM House Administration Committee hearing on committee funding concludes – Hearing concludes on 'Committee Funding for the 115th Congress', with testimony from bipartisan Reps. Mike Conaway, Collin Peterson, Mac Thornberry, Adam Smith, Diane Black, John Yarmuth, Virginia Foxx, Bobby Scott, Greg Walden, Frank Pallone, Susan Brooks, Linda Sanchez, Jeb Hensarling, Maxine Waters, Ed Royce, Eliot Engel, Michael McCaul, Bennie Thompson, Devin Nunes, Adam Schiff, Bob Goodlatte, John Conyers, Rob Bishop, Raul Grijalva, Jason Chaffetz, Elijah Cummings, Pete Sessions, Louise Slaughter, Lamar Smith, Eddie Bernice Johnson, Steven Chabot, Nydia Velazquez, Bill Shuster, Peter DeFazio, Phil Roe, Tim Walz, Kevin Brady, and Richard Neal * Began yesterday Location: Rm 1310, Longworth House Office Bldg, Washington, DC
<http://cha.house.gov/> <https://twitter.com/HouseAdmnGOP>

11:00 AM House Small Business subcommittee hearing on the 'state of the small business economy' – Economic Growth, Tax and Capital Access Subcommittee hearing on 'State of the Small Business Economy', with testimony from American Enterprise Institute Resident Scholar Dr Stan Veuger; Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation Vice President for Entrepreneurship Victor Hwang; NFIB Research Foundation Director of Research and Policy Analysis Holly Wade; and Manufacture NY CEO and founder Bob Bland Location: Rm 2360, Rayburn House Office Bldg, Washington, DC <http://smallbusiness.house.gov/>
<https://twitter.com/SmallBizGOP>

11:30 AM House Speaker Ryan to Hold Weekly Press Briefing – House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI) will hold his weekly press briefing. For questions regarding location or directions to the studio, please contact House Radio-TV Gallery staff at 202-225-5214. Location: Capitol Visitor Center HVC Studio A, HVC 114 www.speaker.gov <https://twitter.com/SpeakerRyan>

11:30 AM Bipartisan congressmen discuss resolution exonerating USMC company – Republican Rep. Walter Jones and Democratic Reps. Seth Moulton and Ruben Gallego hold press conference on 'H. Res. 21' – a resolution stating that the U.S. Marine Corps commandant should issue a public document certifying that members of Fox Company of the Marine Special Operations Command were not at fault in the 4 Mar 2007 firefight with enemy forces in Bati Kot District, Afghanistan. Other speakers include Maj. (Ret.) Fred Galvin, Lt. Col. (Ret.) Steve Morgan, and attorney Raymond Toney Location: House Triangle, Washington, DC
jones.house.gov <https://twitter.com/repwalterjones>

12:00 PM House expected to vote on resolution reversing regulation to protect access to family planning and preventive services – House of

Representatives meets for legislative business, with agenda expected to include completion of consideration of 'H.J.Res. 43 – Providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the final rule submitted by Secretary of Health and Human Services relating to compliance with title X requirements by project recipients in selecting subrecipients' and 'H.J.Res. 69 – Providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the final rule of the Department of the Interior relating to 'Non-Subsistence Take of Wildlife, and Public Participation and Closure Procedures, on National Wildlife Refuges in Alaska' * Title X is the only federal program focused solely on providing family planning and related preventive services
Location: Washington, DC <http://www.house.gov/>

12:30 PM House Veterans' Affairs / Oversight subcommittees joint hearing on union activities on official time at VA – House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Economic Opportunity Subcommittee and House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Government Operations Subcommittee joint hearing on 'The Use of Official Time for Union Activities at the Department of Veterans Affairs', with testimony from Government Accountability Office Assistant Director of Education, Workforce, and Income Security Mary Crenshaw; VA Acting Executive Director of Labor-Management Relations Kim McLeod; Competitive Enterprise Institute Policy Analyst Trey Kovacs; and American Federation of Government Employees National President J. David Cox Location: Rm 2154, Rayburn House Office Bldg, Washington, DC <http://veterans.house.gov/>
<https://twitter.com/HouseVetAffairs>

2:00 PM EESI co-hosts briefing on electric transmission infrastructure – 'Electric Transmission Infrastructure 101: The High-Voltage Grid: Its Operations, Challenges, and Benefits' WIRES / House Grid Innovation Caucus / National Electrical Manufacturers Association / Environmental and Energy Study Institute (EESI) briefing, on the modernization of the nation's network of high-voltage transmission. Speakers include bipartisan Reps. Jerry McNerney and Bob Latta, Smart Wires' Adriann McCoy, Midcontinent ISO's Clair Moeller, Southwest Power Pool's Mike Ross, and PJM Interconnection's Craig Glazer Location: Rm 385, Russell Senate Office Bldg, Washington, DC www.eesi.org/ <https://twitter.com/eesionline>
#eesitalk

2:00 PM House Homeland Security subcommittee hearing on DHS management – Oversight and Management Efficiency Subcommittee hearing on 'Watchdog Recommendations: A Better Way Ahead to Manage the Department of Homeland Security', with testimony from DHS Inspector General John Roth; and Government Accountability Office Director of Homeland Security and Justice Issues Rebecca Gambler Location: CVC 210, U.S. Capitol, Washington, DC homeland.house.gov
<https://twitter.com/HouseHomeland>

2:00 PM House Judiciary subcommittee hearing on religious liberty – Subcommittee on the Constitution and Civil Justice hearing on 'The State of

Religious Liberty in America', with testimony from Christian Legal Society Center for Law and Religious Freedom Director Kim Colby; Becket Senior Counsel Hannah Smith; rabbi David Saperstein; and Alliance Defending Freedom Center for Academic Freedom Senior Counsel Casey Mattox Location: Rm 2141, Rayburn House Office Bldg, Washington, DC
<http://judiciary.house.gov/> <https://twitter.com/HouseJudiciary>

2:00 PM Helsinki Commission film screening and discussion on Roma in Romania – Helsinki Commission, with the State Department and the Embassy of Romania, hosts screening of 'Aferim!' ('Bravo!') – the first Romanian film on the enslavement of Roma – followed by a panel discussion and remarks on the topic featuring Romani activist Dr Margareta Matache, State Department Office of Central European Affairs Director Dereck Hogan, and Embassy of Romania Deputy Chief of Mission Cristian Gaginsky Location: Rm 122, Cannon House Office Bldg, Washington, DC
<http://www.csce.gov>

Other: 8:15 AM Annual Tax Policy & Practice Symposium – Annual Tax Policy & Practice Symposium, with speakers including House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Rep. Kevin Brady, American Action Forum President Douglas Holtz-Eakin, and EY Global Chairman and CEO Mark Weinberger Location: The Ritz-Carlton, Washington DC, 1150 22nd St NW, Washington, DC <http://www.tcpi.org/>

8:30 AM Families USA 22nd annual Health Action conference – Families USA 22nd annual Health Action conference. Opening day speakers include Democrats Sens. Al Franken, Chris Van Hollen, and Debbie Stabenow, and Rep. Robin Kelly, North Carolina NAACP President Rev. William Barber, Enroll America President Anne Filipic, and former CMS Acting Administrator Andy Slavitt Location: Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill, 400 New Jersey Ave NW, Washington, DC
<http://www.familiesusa.org/> <https://twitter.com/FamiliesUSA> #HA2017

11:35 AM New Jersey Chamber of Commerce Walk to Washington event – New Jersey Chamber of Commerce 80th Annual Walk to Washington & Congressional Dinner, with New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, Democrats Sen. Bob Menendez and Cory Booker, and Republican Rep. Chris Smith Location: Marriott Wardman Park Hotel, Washington, DC
www.njchamber.com <https://twitter.com/njchamber> #chambertrain

6:30 PM World Affairs Council Embassy Series event with delegation of the EU to the U.S. – World Affairs Council Embassy Series event with European Union Delegation to the U.S. Head Amb. David O'Sullivan Location: 3900 Spring of Freedom Ln NW, Washington, DC
<http://www.worldaffairsdc.org> https://twitter.com/wac_dc

Education Secretary DeVos addresses Community College National Legislative Summit – Community College National Legislative Summit. Final day speakers include Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos Location: Marriott Wardman Park Hotel, Washington, DC <http://www.acct.org/>
<https://twitter.com/CCTrustees>

Last Laughs

Late Night Political Humor.

Stephen Colbert: "Andy Puzder has withdrawn his nomination. Just to be clear: This is not a scandal. He says he just wants to spend more time with Michael Flynn."

Stephen Colbert: "Republicans were still on board with Puzder until a tape surfaced of Puzder's ex-wife in 1990 appearing on a talk show describing domestic abuse. That took him down. So who brought that tape that toppled a cabinet secretary? You guessed it: Oprah!"

Stephen Colbert: "We do know that Trump's campaign was talking to the Russians a lot, and 'the frequency of the communication and the proximity to Trump of those involved 'raised a red flag' with US intelligence.' Yes, intelligence were worried that once Trump got in the White House, he might raise a red flag."

Stephen Colbert: "Trump also called the story 'fake news,' then tweeted that 'The real scandal here is that classified information is illegally given out by 'intelligence' like candy. Very un-American!' Yeah, you know how it's illegal for Americans to give out candy."

James Corden: "Let's talk about the big news story today: The New York Times has published an article alleging that Trump's advisers were talking to senior Russian officials during the entire election. I know, the most shocking news to come out of this is that Trump has advisers."

James Corden: "The reports say the amount of communication between Trump's advisers and Russia raised a red flag, specifically a red flag with a little yellow hammer and a sickle."

James Corden: "So then again today, they asked Trump point-blank if he was collaborating with the Russians. He said, 'Absolutely nyet.'"

Trevor Noah: "Guys, Trump's an old man. No, like, really old. And maybe that's just it. Maybe that's just it. Think about it. Who watches a ton of TV news and complains about everything they see? Old people."

Trevor Noah: "Once you realize how old Trump is, he seems a lot less

diabolical and a lot more sad. Because as any Nigerian scam artist will tell you, old people are really easy to take advantage of."

Trevor Noah: "I remembered that life with Donald Trump can also be pretty funny. I mean, we all agree Donald Trump is going to destroy the world. But we cannot deny that it will be an amusing destruction."

Trevor Noah: "I'm sorry, Donald Trump is a genius. No one has ever thought to just straight up ask Netanyahu to stop the settlements. Like he just asked him. He asked him like a neighbor telling him to turn down the music."

Jimmy Fallon: "The big story is that last night, the New York Times published a bombshell report that President Trump's campaign was in contact with Russian intelligence since 2015. When asked if it was true, Trump said, 'Nyet – I mean, no!'"

Jimmy Fallon: "Of course the story is all over cable news, and Trump is not happy about it. In fact, he went on Twitter this morning and said that MSNBC and CNN are unwatchable. Then he said, 'And I know, because I spend all day watching them.'"

Jimmy Fallon: "A new report finds that over 55,000 bridges in the US were found to have major structural problems last year. When asked how they're going to fix them, the government was like, 'Eh, we'll cross that gaping hole when we get to it.'"

Seth Meyers: "Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said today that there is no greater supporter of the Jewish state than President Trump. Said Trump, 'Absolutely, I love Florida. Fantastic Jewish state.'"

Seth Meyers: "This Administration is like a really intense haunted house where every door you think is an exit is just a door to a scarier room."

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