

THE HOMELAND SECURITY *NEWS CLIPS*

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TO: THE SECRETARY AND SENIOR STAFF

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LEADING DHS NEWS

McCain Wants Military To Help Secure Border With Mexico

By Harper Neidig
[The Hill](#), April 12, 2016

Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) on Tuesday called for military assistance in securing the southern border and combating drug trafficking.

In a letter to Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson, McCain called for military unmanned aerial vehicles to be used along the Mexican border for surveillance, noting that the Department of Defense (DOD) can assist civilian law

enforcement if a request is made by an official overseeing the law enforcement agency.

"It is my understanding that you have made no such request to DOD," McCain wrote. "If true, I strongly urge that you make this request for support to the DOD immediately and begin coordinating with Ft. Huachuca to take advantage of these available air assets as quickly as possible."

McCain also pressed Johnson on why he hadn't yet sought assistance.

"Have you or any other official at DHS made a request to DOD to coordinate Army UAV training missions at Ft. Huachuca to assist DHS in surveilling the border for counter narcotics activity? If not, please explain why such a request has not been made," he wrote.

Lawsuit Challenges Hold On Immigrant Jailed In Sherburne County

By Jenna Ross

[Minneapolis Star Tribune](#), April 12, 2016

An immigration law clinic at the University of Minnesota has helped file a lawsuit against local and federal authorities for allegedly detaining an immigrant for months after a judge ruled that he could not be deported.

The petition, filed Monday in U.S. District Court in Minnesota, argues that the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's "blanket policy" to hold such immigrants for 90 days or more is unconstitutional.

The University of Minnesota Law School's Center for New Americans, the American Civil Liberties Union of Minnesota and the law firm of Dorsey and Whitney filed the lawsuit on behalf of Rushinga Muzaliwa, a refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo who came to the United States in 2010.

According to the lawsuit, which seeks class-action status, Muzaliwa is being held in the Sherburne County jail in Elk River even though a judge stopped his deportation months ago because Muzaliwa would face torture in his native country.

In 2013, Muzaliwa was convicted in Michigan of domestic violence and third-degree child abuse. The Department of Homeland Security started removal proceedings against him in Minnesota last year. But in January, a judge granted Muzaliwa protection against deportation, the lawsuit says.

"What they're required to do, if a judge says you can't deport these people ... you have to release them," said Charles Samuelson, executive director of the ACLU of Minnesota. "And they're not doing it."

Lawsuit Challenges Detention Of Some Minnesota Refugees

By Marino Eccher

[St. Paul \(MN\) Pioneer Press](#), April 12, 2016

Rushinga Muzaliwa isn't facing criminal charges — he was convicted in Michigan three years ago of domestic violence and child abuse, served his time and was released. Nor is he bound for deportation for those offenses — a judge has ruled that as a refugee, it isn't safe for him to go back to his native Democratic Republic of Congo.

So why, his attorneys want to know, is he still sitting in the Sherburne County Jail?

In a lawsuit filed Monday, a consortium of legal and civil rights groups is challenging the way federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials handle cases like Muzaliwa's. The petition accuses the agency of holding immigrants for months under procedural rules designed for deportation proceedings, even when it's clear such proceedings will never occur.

ICE declined to comment, citing active litigation.

Charles Samuelson, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union in Minnesota, said in a statement that the agency's conduct is "unnecessary and violates the constitutional rights of the immigrants being held." The group filed the lawsuit along with the University of Minnesota Law School's Center for New Americans and the firm Dorsey & Whitney.

Muzaliwa, who has been in the United States since 2010, is the named plaintiff in the case, but the lawsuit seeks to cover others in the same situation. Teresa Nelson, the Minnesota ACLU's legal director, said at least 40 other people have been similarly detained over the past four years in Minnesota, with perhaps a half-dozen currently locked up.

They're typically held for 90 days under ICE policy. The agency would typically use the detention period to move forward with deportation, Nelson said — but in these cases, those jailed aren't going anywhere. International law bars returning them to countries where they'd face torture, and they have no ties to other nations.

Becky Cassler, a University of Minnesota law student working with the Center for New Americans on the issue, called the detentions "senseless," saying those affected might get word that they'd won the right to stay in the country but have to sit in jail anyway to wait out the ICE policy.

"It feels very arbitrary," she said. "We would love to get an answer to the question as to why they're being detained."

Cassler said the detentions can be socially and economically crippling to people who often have a hard time making ends meet as it is, and are a needless expense for taxpayers.

The lawsuit seeks Muzaliwa's release and asks a judge to bar similar detentions.

The same groups have tangled with ICE before, notably in the case of Nelson Kargbo, a refugee from Sierra Leone. Kargbo was held in an ICE case for more than two years before a judge recommended his release. ICE let him go, but

the case continues as the two sides spar over the underlying legal issues.

U Of M, ACLU Sue ICE Over Detentions In Minnesota

[WCCO-AM Minneapolis](#), April 12, 2016

MINNEAPOLIS (WCCO) – The University of Minnesota says its Center for New Americans, along with other legal groups, has filed a class action lawsuit against U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement for allegedly detaining immigrants for months, even after a judge has ruled that they cannot be deported.

The school, in concert with the American Civil Liberties Union and the law firm Dorsey & Whitney, filed the lawsuit on behalf of those who face torture or persecution in their home countries and have been granted deportation protection by a judge. In this case, the immigrants are allowed to be released or be deported to another country where they also have citizenship.

However, the school says that some of these protected people are being detained at county jails in Minnesota, even when there's no country they could be deported to. The typical detention period is 90 days.

"The government is spending millions of dollars locking up people whose detentions serve no purpose," said Charles Samuelson, executive director of the ACLU-MN, in a statement.

The lawsuit against ICE argues that holding immigrants after a judge grants protection violates the U.S. Constitution, national ICE policy and Supreme Court precedent.

Lawsuit: St. Paul ICE Office Wrongly Detaining Immigrants

By Manda Lillie

[KSJR-FM Collegeville \(MN\)](#), April 12, 2016

A class action lawsuit accuses the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement field office in St. Paul of wrongly detaining people even after a judge has rejected deporting them.

ICE declined to comment on pending litigation. The suit comes from the American Civil Liberties Union of Minnesota, the University of Minnesota Law School's Center for New Americans and Dorsey & Whitney.

Immigration judges can permit people who are in the U.S. illegally to stay if they face potential persecution or torture at home.

Teresa Nelson of ACLU Minnesota says the St. Paul field office is misapplying the law in such cases and jailing people for up to 90 days, even though she says they can legally stay in the U.S.

"They've had the ruling, they've been granted humanitarian relief, the appeals process is over," Nelson said.

"There's no other reason to hold them at this point. The judge has equivalently found that they will face torture or persecution on their home country."

Obama Aides Vexed By Visa Crackdown

The administration is struggling to craft a new anti-terrorist screening process ordered up by Congress last year.

By Nahal Toosi

[Politico](#), April 12, 2016

Last December, as the world reeled from the deadly attacks in Paris and San Bernardino, California, President Barack Obama fully backed lawmakers who passed legislation aimed at keeping out terrorists who try to reach the U.S. through the popular Visa Waiver Program.

But nearly four months after Obama signed the bill into law, his administration is struggling to implement a key piece of it, one that affects dual nationals. It also is refusing to release clear criteria as to how it will apply that part of law.

That is frustrating both critics and supporters of the measure who worry the new screening process is at best confusing, at worst discriminatory and ultimately ineffective at catching would-be enemies of the United States. One senior Department of Homeland Security official, in describing the challenges involved in enforcing the law, called the new set-up "an honor system with checks and balances."

The administration's grappling comes as the European Union is considering whether to require all American travelers to obtain visas — the latest in an escalating spat over travel deals between Washington and Brussels. It also comes as a leading opponent of the dual national provision, Sen. Jeff Flake, is trying to get it repealed through an amendment to the Federal Aviation Administration re-authorization bill this week.

"We need this fixed, and I hope the administration will help us out," the Arizona Republican said. As for the people who supported it? "I don't think that they understood the way nationality, dual nationality, is conferred by some countries," Flake said. "I don't think they fully thought through what the response would be from Europe and the number of people that would be caught up without any gains in national security."

The new U.S. law — passed as part of the omnibus spending bill — made significant changes to the Visa Waiver Program, which allows citizens of 38 mostly European countries to temporarily visit the U.S. without a visa. The dual national provision requires citizens of those countries to get visas if they also happen to be nationals of Iran, Iraq, Syria or Sudan.

Civil liberties and minority rights groups pointed out that there is no international agreement on the rules of nationality and that many people are dual nationals even if they do not wish to be. They warned that the law was a form of ethnic

and ancestral discrimination because some countries treat nationality as something passed down from father to child.

So a woman born and raised in Japan (one of the 38 countries) is considered Iranian under Iranian law if her father is Iranian — even if she has never visited the Middle Eastern state. Nationality also can be conferred through marriage, according to some interpretations of Iranian law. Such nationality is rarely easy to renounce — and just because a person obtains foreign citizenship doesn't mean they are no longer Iranian, Iraqi, Sudanese or Syrian.

POLITICO has been asking the administration since December to lay out how it will decide who qualifies as a citizen of Syria, Iraq, Sudan or Iran, a determination that could set an international precedent. In a statement to POLITICO late last week, officials indicated the strategy will be to determine each potential visitor's nationality on a case-by-case basis.

"The U.S. government need not recognize another country's conferral of nationality if it determines that nationality to be 'nominal,' or, in other words, if the connections indicating potential nationality are so minimal or attenuated that an individual should not be considered a dual national for the purposes of the U.S. Visa Waiver Program," the DHS statement says. "In this way, DHS assesses whether an individual is a national of a country based on an individual's relationship to that country, such as if an individual maintains allegiance to that country."

But administration officials declined to answer specific questions posed by POLITICO, such as whether they will consider children born to Iranian fathers outside Iran as Iranian, whether they will count only people born in one of the four countries as nationals of those countries, or whether they will consider nationality conferred through marriage as valid. They also would not specify what counts as "maintains allegiance."

A senior U.S. government official said the decision not to lay out clear rules is "being done out of an abundance of caution in order to prevent any potential malevolent actors from gaming the system."

That didn't pass muster with even some supporters of the dual national provision, who say the administration's approach is problematic and could lead to inconsistent application of the law.

Emanuele Ottolenghi, a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, said he worries terrorists from those four countries — but especially Iran — can currently easily exploit lax travel restrictions to get their operatives to the United States. But he said not laying out the official guidelines for who the U.S. will consider a dual national could render the new system worthless.

"The risk that people lie always exists — and if this is what DHS truly fears, then they should discard the Visa Waiver Program altogether. To not disclose clear criteria for

fear that people might try to cheat the system will in fact produce the opposite outcome," he warned.

Already, the changes to the visa waiver law have snared European journalists, artists and academics who were used to visiting the U.S. without a visa and suddenly found themselves required to get one.

"By failing to provide clarity in how the restrictions will be enforced, it further feeds people's perception that they are being discriminated against and that they face increased risk of travel restrictions because of their family heritage," said Jamal Abdi of NIAC Action, an Iranian-American activist group.

The way the U.S. captures information about potential visitors is through the Electronic System for Travel Authorization form. Visitors from the 38 countries must fill out an ESTA form before coming to the United States. If the authorization comes through, no visa is needed. If it doesn't, a person has to set up an appointment with the U.S. embassy or consulate to obtain a visa, an often time-consuming and expensive process.

But the ESTA forms themselves are confusing. Two of the early questions ask if an applicant is or has ever been a citizen or national of another country; the only answer options are "yes" or "no." For potential dual nationals who don't know what standards the U.S. is applying, it's unclear which answer to pick.

For those who say they are dual nationals of Iran, Iraq, Syria or Sudan, follow-up questions ask how that person acquired that country's nationality. Anyone who lists their birthplace as Iran, Iraq, Syria or Sudan is likely to get follow-up questions as well. But unless a person is familiar with the (often unclear) nationality laws of various countries in play, they may not know the proper answers.

"DHS is asking people who want to use the visa waiver program if they are a national or citizen of one of those countries, which many applicants will feel uncomfortable answering because it puts them in the position of making a complex legal determination," said Greg Chen, director of advocacy at the American Immigration Lawyers Association.

The senior DHS official acknowledged that the way the form is set up, some ill-intentioned people who technically are dual nationals could still get to the U.S. without a visa. For example, if someone wasn't born in Iran, Iraq, Syria or Sudan and has never obtained a travel document or passport for those countries, they may not get flagged.

But he also noted that the U.S. has other safeguards in place as part of the process, including human review and checking terror watch-lists, that could prevent abuses.

"The way we're approaching this is to try to make sure we're not over-inclusive in imputing dual national status to someone who may have only limited links to the countries in question," the official said. "It's an honor system with checks and balances."

The European Union was one of the early critics of the new U.S. visa rules, but it also has long been frustrated that the U.S. does not allow five EU countries (Croatia, Poland, Bulgaria, Cyprus, and Romania) to be part of the Visa Waiver Program in the first place.

The EU has floated the idea that it might halt visa-free travel for Americans heading to Europe to pressure the U.S.; on Tuesday, it gave itself until mid-July to make a decision. Although the EU is unlikely to take such a drastic step because of the business and tourism fallout, the fact that it's under discussion shows how ugly the dispute has gotten.

The new U.S. visa rules also require would-be visitors from the 38 countries to get a visa if they have traveled to Syria, Iraq, Sudan, Libya, Somalia, Yemen and Iran since March 2011. But the administration has carved out exceptions for journalists, aid workers and others, although it has also not been clear as to how it will define those groups.

While strong legislative support exists for the travel provisions, a growing number of lawmakers are unhappy with the effects on dual nationals. Among the lawmakers willing to rethink the dual national element is Rep. Candice Miller, lead sponsor of the original bill.

"I understand that issues have been raised with the dual national provision and believe that those concerns may warrant additional discussions," Miller, a Michigan Republican, told POLITICO in a statement.

Baseball's Lobbying In D.C. Has Shifted With The Times

By Kevin McDermott

[St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#), April 12, 2016

WASHINGTON • Around the turn of the century, the Major League Baseball Commissioners Office was annually spending \$1 million or more lobbying Congress and federal agencies.

But its spending is down, and the focus of the lobbying has changed in recent years. From a high of \$1.6 million in 1999, the amount Major League Baseball spent lobbying fell to \$330,000 last year, according to MLB's filings with the federal government and reported by the Center for Responsive Politics.

And from steroids and other drug-related issues at the turn of the century, lobbying has now shifted to stadium security and relationships with Cuba, a hotbed of baseball and target of Obama administration normalization moves, according to MLB lobbying reports and interviews with MLB officials.

Just more evidence for those that perennially argue that baseball is life.

As any fan of Major League baseball knows, stadium security has been heightened in recent years, with the addition of metal detectors at gates, and special designations

of the All Star Game and World Series as national security events, prompting heightened awareness over the threat of terrorism.

The system has worked, if it has created more hassles for the average fan just out to watch a ballgame. If anything, baseball became a field of healing, with an emotional first pitch at Yankee Stadium thrown by then President George W. Bush in 2001 when baseball helped ease America back to a new normality after 9-11.

Major League officials and Department of Homeland Security officials are reticent to talk about safety at ballparks. DHS Secretary Jeh Johnson met with owners at baseball's winter meetings to "discuss ongoing collaboration for the upcoming season," said DHS spokesman Scott McConnell.

The collaboration includes "vulnerability assessments, training and guidance, and raising public awareness about the importance of reporting suspicious activity through the Department's 'if you see something, say something' campaign," McConnell told the Post-Dispatch.

He said that since 2010, DHS has conducted more than 275 security assessments at sports stadiums and arenas. (Chuck Raasch)

73.8 million: Regular season attendance at the Major League ballparks in 2015

79.6 million: Attendance in 2007, highest of the last 10 years, according to statista.com

3,764,815: Los Angeles Dodgers' 2015 attendance, the highest of 30 teams

3,520,889: St. Louis Cardinals' attendance, second highest last year

1,287,054: Tampa Bay Rays' attendance, lowest of the 30 teams

HE SAID IT: "Given the current environment, we have worked with Congress and appropriate federal agencies to ensure the safest experience possible for the millions of fans who visit our ballparks throughout the country." —Pat Courtney, spokesman for Major League Baseball.

Homeland Security Vehicle Stolen From North Spokane Facility

By Rachel Alexander

[Spokane \(WA\) Spokesman-Review](#), April 12, 2016

A Department of Homeland Security SUV was stolen early Tuesday morning from a federal facility in north Spokane.

Someone cut through the fence at the building at 7600 N. Market St. and stole a white Chevy Tahoe around 2 a.m. Tuesday, Spokane County Sheriff's Office spokesman Deputy Mark Gregory said.

The suspect went into the garage to take the car, then drove it through the chain-link fence surrounding the building to escape, Gregory said.

The vehicle is missing a passenger mirror and has a black brush guard on the front bumper.

A person who lived in the area reported seeing a blue Chevy pickup in the area of the building during the theft, Gregory said. That truck left shortly after the stolen car, the witness reported.

The Sheriff's Office has no suspects and is continuing to investigate.

Stolen Government Vehicle Found Ticketed Outside North Spokane Apartment Complex

[Associated Press](#), April 12, 2016

SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) – A Spokane-area man will stand trial in May for allegedly shooting his in-laws and their son, then burning their bodies at their home in Colbert, Washington. 31-year-old Roy Murry faces aggravated murder and arson charges in the deaths of Lisa Canfield, her husband, Terry Canfield, and Lisa Canfield's son, John Constable.

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IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT

Harris Co. Sheriff To Meet With Critics Of Program That Screens For Those In Country Illegally

By Mihir Zaveri

[Houston Chronicle](#), April 12, 2016

Harris County Sheriff Ron Hickman said he would meet this week with immigrant rights activists over a controversial federal program that trains local law enforcement officers to help federal agents screen for illegal immigrants in the jails.

The meeting – scheduled for Thursday – comes as activists in recent weeks have increased pressure to end the county's participation in the program. The memorandum of agreement for the program between the sheriff's office and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement is up in June, Hickman said.

Hickman will then decide whether or not to continue the agreement, which began in 2008 under then-Sheriff Tommy Thomas and was renewed under his successor, Adrian Garcia.

"I would have to have a very compelling reason not to do it," Hickman said on renewing the agreement.

Harris County Judge Ed Emmett recommended to county commissioners at their meeting Tuesday to wait for the outcome of Hickman's meeting with activists. Hickman said he was looking to hear the critics' point of view on the

287(g) program and to educating them on how the program works, stating that it does not endanger anyone who has not been booked into jail on a crime.

"The perception is somewhat off-base," Hickman said.

Many speakers said Tuesday that the program spreads distrust in the immigrant community.

Maria Trevino Rodriguez, who is with United We Dream Houston and is helping to organize a campaign against the 287(g) program, said that as a child, she feared her undocumented parents would be deported. She said at the meeting that the 287(g) program "has been a huge factor to that daily fear."

Authorized by Congress in the late 1990s, the program has been credited with identifying hundreds of thousands of suspected illegal immigrants nationwide since 2006, when it gained popularity under the second Bush administration.

The program grew increasingly controversial over the years, particularly after a series of critical reports by the Government Accountability Office and the Inspector General and high-profile allegations of abuse or mistakes by local law enforcement agencies.

It is not the same as the Secure Communities program, which has drawn its share of controversy and opposition.

Currently, 32 agencies nationwide participate in 287(g). The only other law enforcement agency in Texas that has a 287(g) agreement with ICE is the Carrollton Police Department.

Several local governments across the U.S. have ended their participation in the 287(g) program. In May, Los Angeles County voted to terminate its contract with ICE.

Eight deputies screened about 1,800 people in the Harris County jail in 2015, sending roughly 10 percent of those to ICE for possible deportation through the program, called 287(g), Hickman said.

CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION

Border Officers In El Paso Find \$1.6M In Meth In Tires

[Associated Press](#), April 12, 2016

EL PASO, Texas (AP) — Federal officers in West Texas have seized more than \$1.6 million worth of methamphetamine hidden in the rear tires of an SUV entering from Mexico.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection officials on Tuesday announced the bust at the Paso Del Norte border crossing in El Paso. The driver from Dallas was detained on drug smuggling charges after officers found more than 50 pounds of meth in the vehicle.

Investigators say the SUV arrived at the border crossing Saturday morning. A drug-sniffing dog alerted officers to something unusual in the rear of the vehicle.

Officers removed the back tires and found custom-manufactured metal collars bolted to the rims. The metal collars were cut open and revealed about a dozen methamphetamine-filled bundles.

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Smugglers ‘Spared No Expense’ To Hide \$1.6M In Meth In Dallas Woman’s Tires

[Dallas Morning News](#), April 12, 2016

A Dallas woman was arrested on the border trying to smuggle over a million dollars in methamphetamine into the U.S. – hidden in the tires of her SUV, authorities say.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection officials announced Tuesday the weekend bust at the border crossing in El Paso.

“Smugglers spared no expense in their efforts to cross this sizable drug load,” said Beverly Good, director of CBP for the El Paso crossing.

Investigators found a dozen bundles of meth stashed inside the Trailblazer’s tires. (U.S. Customs and Border Protection)

The driver, identified as 46-year-old Matilda Perez, was detained on drug smuggling charges after officers found more than 50 pounds of meth, with a street value of more than \$1.6 million.

Investigators say Perez’s Chevy Trailblazer arrived at the border crossing Saturday morning. A drug-sniffing dog named Tiran alerted officers to something unusual in the rear of the vehicle.

The SUV was scanned with an X-ray that detected “anomalies in the appearance of the rear tires,” according to a written release from the agency.

Officers removed the back tires and found custom metal collars bolted to the rims. The metal collars were cut open to reveal a dozen bundles of meth.

Perez was handed over to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement to face drug smuggling charges.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Border Patrol Union Local Ratifies Trump Endorsement

[Associated Press](#), April 12, 2016

EL PASO, Texas (AP) — A local union of Border Patrol agents narrowly voted down a motion to break from the National Border Patrol Council’s endorsement of presidential candidate Donald Trump.

The El Paso Times reports Local 1929 in El Paso voted 14-13 Tuesday night to support the union’s national endorsement and reject a proposal to take a neutral stance in the presidential election.

The GOP hopeful has drawn criticism for a pledge to build a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border and launch mass deportations of an estimated 11 million immigrants suspected of being in the country illegally.

The local represents about 1,700 agents — about 10 percent of the union’s total membership — in the Border Patrol’s El Paso sector, which covers New Mexico and West Texas.

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El Paso Border Patrol Union Votes To Back Trump

By Daniel Borunda

[USA Today](#), April 13, 2016

EL PASO — The U.S. Border Patrol local union in El Paso on Tuesday evening voted 14-13 to back the National Border Patrol Council’s endorsement of Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump.

A group of border agents from El Paso and New Mexico were trying to get Local 1929 to stay neutral in the presidential campaign and reject the national union’s endorsement of the controversial Republican presidential candidate.

“The endorsement from the national was basically an endorsement for border security. That’s all it was,” Stu Harris, vice president of the National Border Patrol Council Local 1929 in El Paso, told the reporters after the union meeting Tuesday.

Harris declined to speak further about the vote at the union meeting which was closed to the public and the news media. Agents leaving the meeting said they could not speak to the media because they would get in trouble.

A group of more than 20 elected officials, community leaders and educators in El Paso and southern New Mexico had issued letters in the support of the agents seeking to reject the Trump endorsement.

The endorsement of Trump, who has made inflammatory comments about Mexicans, women and Muslims, damages the trust that the Border Patrol has worked years to build in El Paso and other border communities, the regional leaders said.

El Paso leaders who backed the agents said they were disappointed that the move to reject the Trump endorsement failed but that they were proud of the dissenting agents showed the courage to stand up at the union.

“You can’t support someone like Donald Trump and distance yourself from what he says about minorities and women and you can’t distance yourself from the violence he tried to incite,” El Paso County Judge Veronica Escobar, one of the officials who signed the letter, said. “It’s ridiculous to

make the claim that only one aspect of Trump is being supported. You endorse Trump and you endorse all of him.”

About 30 years ago, there was a “very adversarial relationship between the community and the Border Patrol that was damaging to El Paso,” Escobar said. “There has been a positive evolution and I think the local union could have reinforced that today between them and the community they police.”

The local represents about 1,700 agents — about 10% of the union’s total membership — in the Border Patrol’s El Paso sector, which covers far West Texas and all of New Mexico.

The March 30 endorsement by the National Border Patrol Council described Trump as “bold and outspoken” who “doesn’t embrace political correctness” and that “there is no greater physical or economic threat to Americans today than our open border.”

U.S. Rep. Beto O’Rourke, D-El Paso, who supported the dissenting agents, said that the National Border Patrol Council’s endorsement ignores the deep historic, cultural and economic ties between the U.S. and Mexico.

“I’m disappointed, but I’m very encouraged there were courageous agents that stood up to this endorsement and almost prevailed in rejecting something that is so harmful to this country, so harmful to El Paso and so harmful to the image of the Border Patrol,” he said.

O’Rourke said that he had not spoken directly to the leadership of Local 1929 or the national union regarding the Trump endorsement.

Susie Byrd, a member of the El Paso Independent School District board and a former member of the El Paso City Council, helped organized support for the Border Patrol agents concerned about the Trump endorsement.

“I think it was so important what the dissenters did for our community,” Byrd said. “They stood up for the values this community represents.”

Army Combat Vet Sues Homeland Security

By Mara MacDonald

[WDIV-TV Detroit](#), April 13, 2016

DETROIT – Sgt. Anthony Gazvoda spent 10 months in Afghanistan. He was involved in 34 firefights and earned an Army commendation medal with valor. He was honorably discharged and went home looking for a job.

The 31-year-old, who is from Michigan’s Upper Peninsula, was thrilled when an opportunity to be a Border Control agent with the Department of Homeland Security presented itself. He took it and was posted to Laredo, Texas.

“After about two months I started noticing my sleep was off. I started having anxiety and depression,” Gazvoda said.

That wasn’t all. He was hypervigilant all the time. His co-workers noticed he was falling apart and sent him back to Michigan on paid leave to sort out what was wrong. The

government’s doctors agreed on a diagnosis: Gazvoda was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

“The government’s doctors have evaluated him and said he’s fit to be a Border Patrol agent. We just need to get him out of the southern, arid desert,” attorney Jason Turkish said.

The climate and terrain in Laredo brought on flashbacks of gun battles and hauling friends out of burning Humvees.

Gazvoda didn’t think a transfer would be a problem. He was wrong.

He said he was caught up in a government tornado of paperwork and threats, and ultimately decided to sue the Department of Homeland Security in federal court.

“There is no bigger fight than the federal government,” Turkish said.

It’s fight they won. A federal judge has ruled the government can’t force Gazvoda to return to Laredo or lose his job, granting a temporary injunction.

This kind of legal victory rarely happens. Gazvoda said he is hoping it will become permanent.

Turkish says nobody is asking for special treatment here, just a transfer due to health issues from serving in the military.

“You send these brave men and women off to war. You have to be accountable when they return home,” Turkish said.

Gazvoda isn’t suing for any monetary damages, only for a job in Michigan.

TRANSPORTATION SECURITY **ADMINISTRATION**

Expected Long Airport Waits May Dampen Summer Getaways

By Eric Kurhi

[San Jose \(CA\) Mercury News](#), April 13, 2016

Thousands of air travelers in the Bay Area and around the nation may be in for long delays this summer because of a shortage of Transportation Security Administration personnel that clogged security check lines in San Jose and other airports over spring break.

In the Bay Area, the epicenter of the problem was at Mineta San Jose International Airport, where travelers arriving well before their scheduled flights found the usual preparations just didn’t cut it.

“There were people who missed flights and had to wait eight hours to start their vacation,” said Mineta spokeswoman Rosemary Barnes. “There were people who missed job interviews. We heard about a child who tripped and fell while running to catch a flight.”

San Francisco "didn't experience any significant issues during spring break, despite strong volumes," said San Francisco International Airport spokesman Doug Yakel. And at Oakland International Airport, spokeswoman Keonnis Taylor said that "while we certainly have had our challenges, I wouldn't say we were hit as hard" as San Jose.

Hun Kim, of Orange County, who was flying out of San Jose Monday night and at the end of a fairly light queue, said it was a different scene two weeks ago when the line stretched toward the rotating sculpture in Terminal B.

"Even the security lady was shaking her head," he said.

Barnes said TSA has since increased staffing and brought in a dog team during certain peak hours – the sniffer pooch detects explosives and can eliminate the need for shoe removal to speed things up.

"However, these solutions need to be permanent and long-term," Barnes said, adding that the airport's "passenger activity is expected to increase by 13 percent this summer with the addition of new domestic and international flights."

The airport has since recommended that passengers arrive at least two hours ahead of time for domestic flights; three hours for international. They've also posted signs along the security line queue letting people know where to direct their complaints – to the Transportation Security Administration, which staffs the checkpoints.

"We are so focused on having good partnership with other agencies, but it was getting so bad," Barnes said. "People are standing in line for two hours during lunch time, and they are losing business hours, and they're raging at your Twitter account."

Which they certainly did.

"One TSA checker ... are you kidding me?" tweeted Jordan Keddie on Friday. "@FlySJC everyone around us has already or is about to miss flights."

Dozens more echoed the same sentiments, as did emails sent to the airport's customer service address.

Other airports around the country have also expressed frustrations with TSA staffing, including Atlanta, the busiest in the world. There, airport manager Miguel Southwell fired off a letter to TSA in February threatening the possibility of hiring a private contractor to take over security because of "unacceptable" security check wait times of 52 minutes.

In San Jose, U.S. Representatives Mike Honda and Zoe Lofgren, both San Jose Democrats, said they would ask TSA to examine how they allocate their resources.

TSA spokesman Nico Melendez said that even with additional staffing, there can be bottlenecks at airports that simply don't have room for more screening lanes and equipment.

Part of the problem in San Jose could be related to the increased passenger load that's been steadily rising in recent years. Her prediction of 13 percent growth expected this summer is nearly twice the TSA's cited national average

uptick of 7 percent over spring break. SFO officials said they predict summer travel to spike by 7 percent. Oakland officials predicted an increase of 11 percent to 14 percent in the summer months.

"Those are very high levels that we have not seen in many years," said John Albrecht, marketing and communications director at the Oakland airport. "We will be working with TSA to increase staffing and make sure all our lines are open and people are directed to the lines they need to be in to make operations as efficient as possible."

In Oakland on Tuesday morning, a line 50 people deep waited in the standard security queue while Pre-Check fliers could often walk straight to the security agent or at most wait behind 10 people.

Marc Atlantic, of Austin, Texas, who was in town for business, said he's seen the line get a bit longer during peak times when more people not officially registered are allowed in.

"Sometimes they do let a bunch in, and it definitely clogs it up," he said.

Another issue involves under use of the TSA Pre-Check screening program, which allows passengers to pay a fee, have a background check conducted in advance and go through expedited screening. It's still in use but hasn't been popular enough to reduce the lines in the main checkpoints.

Jim Lites, executive director of the California Airports Council that represents the commercial airports throughout the state, said predictions for the summer travel season are bleak.

"Most of our membership is anticipating a challenge," he said. "We expect that the manpower may not be sufficient to handle the volume of travelers, which we expect to be on the upswing compared to recent years."

He said there was hope that the Pre-Check process would help, but that's questionable at best.

"While it has helped," he said, "I don't think the program has penetrated deep enough to offset the increase in travelers most airports are anticipating."

New Bomb-sniffing Dogs Coming To Lambert

By Leah Thorsen

[St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#), April 12, 2016

Expect a quick sniffing when you get to Lambert-St. Louis International Airport.

Dogs with special training to detect explosives will be stationed in each terminal during peak travel times within the next several weeks, said Jim Spriggs, the state's federal security director.

The dogs are trained to follow the smell of explosives through the air, which police dogs already stationed at the airport cannot do.

Those police dogs focus on sniffing out threats in things like baggage. The new Transportation Security Administration

dogs — which are stationed at more than 100 airports and transit systems — will smell people.

"They're trained to pick up scents as people move through the facility," Spriggs said.

The dogs don't need passengers to stop to do their job.

And if the dog doesn't detect any suspicious smells, passengers may be cleared to go through the TSA's PreCheck screening — that allows preapproved passengers to bypass the main line and keep their shoes on.

One such dog is Eette, a 5-year-old yellow Labrador retriever and Hungarian vizsla mix.

For the past few years, she and her TSA handler, Jasmine Bourne, were stationed in Orlando, Fla. Now they'll be at Lambert.

"It's a real-time threat assessment," Bourne said of the dog's abilities.

On Tuesday, she and Eette demonstrated what passengers can expect to see. They stood near the TSA gates at Terminal 2, where Southwest flights come and go, as passengers made their way to the security gates.

Eette, wearing a vest emblazoned with the TSA badge and a "do not pet" sign, briefly smelled the legs of those who walked by her, sometimes lifting or turning her head a bit to get a whiff of bags and purses.

Another dog, a German shorthaired pointer, is set to join her at Lambert in the coming weeks, said Jon Erwin, field canine coordinator for the TSA.

The dogs are trained at Lackland Air Force Base just outside San Antonio. The average cost to train a dog and handler is \$24,000, the TSA said.

The first letter of Eette's name signals her litter. Such dogs are named in memory of victims of the attacks on Sept. 11, 2001.

Sadie Ete, 36, was killed in the north tower of the World Trade Center.

Widen Perimeters Of Airport Security?

By Steve Moore

[CNN](#), April 12, 2016

Steve Moore served as an FBI special agent and supervisory special agent for 25 years, retiring in 2008. He is the author and co-author of several books, including "Special Agent Man," (Chicago Press Review, 2012) and "The Forgotten Killer," (Amazon Press, 2014), with Doug Preston, John Douglas, Mark Olshaker, Judge Michael Heavey, Tom Wright and Jim Lovering. The opinions expressed in this commentary are his.

(CNN)We've all watched in horror the tragic scenes of the wounded and dead in the international departure hall at Brussels-Zevanem Airport. Nearly as horrendous were the cellphone videos of tourists huddling after shots at the U.S. Capitol. These images have drawn calls for the enlargement of "security perimeters" at protected locations around the

world. While on the face of it, the idea seems sound; in reality such a strategy is more likely to be disastrous.

At high-risk locations around the world, security areas have become an accepted fact of life. The goal of enlarging security areas, obviously, is to protect more people within larger "safe zones." If terrorists can bomb the departure halls at an airport, the logic says, then include the departure halls in the screened perimeter. Fine. But increasing security perimeters introduces problems that actually exacerbate, not alleviate risk.

A central component of airport security around the world is a guarded perimeter around a "sterilized" secure area. Common practice now is to include only the departure concourses (gate areas) in the security area. The question becomes, if departure halls (ticketing areas) were also to be included in airport security, where would security checkpoints have to be located? The answer is; at the entrance to the airport terminal. This does not improve security for the passengers, it simply moves the point at which they can be targeted to a place much more advantageous to terrorists.

In the Brussels attack, the terrorists were forced to use improvised explosive devices, or IED's, small enough to fit into checked luggage, in order to enter the terminal without raising suspicion. This limitation reduced the size of the IED that could be used. Further limiting their ability to do damage was the fact that in a departure hall, absent lines at a counter, the passengers are more uniformly dispersed throughout the area.

If, however, departure halls were moved within sterile areas, the security checkpoints would have to be adjacent to the entrance to the terminals, likely within makeshift structures for climate control. This would mean the screening portal would now be adjacent to the street — and therefore vulnerable to a car bomb secreted inside a private car, stolen taxi or any other vehicle. A car bomb can easily carry 10 times the explosives of a luggage bomb. Exacerbating this fact, passengers would inevitably be queued up at security lines, grouped tightly together, removing shoes and belts, preoccupied, and with only a thin wall between them and the vehicle-borne device. Think Oklahoma City. Such an attack would kill hundreds, not dozens.

Ironically, the screening lines themselves have created an area of extreme vulnerability. No matter how far out you move the perimeter, a security checkpoint is required, and large groups of people are inevitable.

There is another significant problem with increasing security perimeter size: Resources. As perimeters increase, the area within the perimeters increases exponentially. Soon, there might not be enough resources to adequately secure the sterile areas, rendering them moot. This is not to imply that physical security screenings are useless. Had there not been effective screening in Brussels, the bombs would likely

have been on airliners, not in the departure hall. But security must be improved.

Around the world, countries are going to have to make great strides in "human factors" detection as a means to identify potential terrorists. The Israelis have accomplished this with success for years, as have the British. TSA is also employing its version, "screening passengers by observation technique," or SPOT.

All these techniques involve comparing observed behaviors in airports to known behaviors and appearances of terrorists. For instance, in Brussels, the sighting of two men wearing gloves, walking together, with similar luggage, in proximity to a third, possibly disguised man, might have rung alarms.

While critics of these systems allege the techniques are not effective or are potentially discriminatory, that should not dissuade us from employing them. Early screening proved less than adequate, but nobody advocates eliminating it. Should nationality be part of this human-factors screening system? If it isn't, we are intentionally subjecting travelers to significantly increased risk simply to avoid offending some.

So how do we protect the traveling public from terrorism? Perhaps fittingly, the analogy may come from the fight against cancer. Medical science battles cancer in many ways. The goal is prevention, but if that is unsuccessful, early detection is crucial. After diagnosis, chemotherapy and surgery are potential strategies. Ultimately, it is a multidisciplinary approach.

Similarly, terrorism can only be defeated by elimination of conditions that are conducive to the illness. Early detection by law enforcement is essential for success, and once diagnosed, a variety of "treatments" are available. However, unlike cancer, screening to prevent terrorism is the last line of defense, not the first.

Autism Spectrum Kids Get Travel Help

By Jeremy Thacker

[KVOA-TV Tucson \(AZ\)](#), April 13, 2016

TUCSON – Local families dealing with Autism spectrum challenges are getting some welcomed help.

A program called "Fly SAAFE" is preparing kids who fall in the spectrum for family travel.

The Tucson Alliance for Autism (TAFA) in partnership with the Tucson International Airport, Transportation Security Administration (TSA), and American Airlines (AA) held its second "Fly SAAFE (Southern Arizona Autism Flight Event)" program. This program allows families to participate in a "curb-to-plane" experience at the Airport so they are better prepared to travel with their child or children who have Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Salina Regional Hoping For TSA Screening

By Tim Horan And Tim Unruh

[Salina \(KS\) Journal](#), April 13, 2016

The owner of a Salina travel agency said she would feel uncomfortable booking flights on an airplane that did not receive federal passenger screening.

"Whether an airplane has nine passengers or 30, I think it is important to have security," said Saline County Commissioner Luci Larson, owner of Action Travel, at the county commission meeting Tuesday.

Great Lakes Airlines has been ready since April 1 to begin offering nonstop flights to Denver from Salina Regional Airport, with help from a \$1.99 million annual Essential Air Service subsidy.

But the start of service is stalled until the Transportation Security Administration begins screening services at Salina. Two months ago, the TSA claimed it didn't have the budget to screen passengers in Salina and instead would screen them at Denver International Airport.

Salina airport officials argue that screening in Denver would cause delays in catching connecting flights in Denver and adding time to travel. Vote could be today

All of that could change starting today, Larson said, when the U.S. House of Representatives votes on the TSA Fairness Act. The legislation is co-sponsored in both houses of Congress by Rep. Tim Huelskamp and Sens. Jerry Moran and Pat Roberts, all Kansas Republicans.

Huelskamp is one of eight members in the House co-sponsoring legislation to ensure TSA passenger screening at small airports. A vote on House Bill 4549 could happen as soon as 1 this afternoon or be rolled into Thursday's schedule, wrote Jennifer Pett, a Huelskamp spokeswoman, in an email.

But a House vote is only one step. The measure in the Senate is attached to Federal Aviation Administration legislation that is expected to clear that chamber this week, Pett said. Could be fast-tracked

"There's the potential it could get fast-tracked using Senate procedure and be signed into law in less than a month," she wrote in her email.

Larson, who is also an ex-officio member of the Salina Airport Authority, said TSA security at Salina may be necessary for Great Lakes Airlines to be successful.

"Everyone is holding their breath. Right now, we have no air service," she said. "If it clears for Salina, it would affect a lot of other airports."

She said it is embarrassing for Salina to not have air surface.

"It's a slap in the face," she said. "We have big corporations that have their headquarters here."

She said the Salina Regional Health Center frequently flies in prospective doctors.

"Kansas City is just too far," Larson said.

She said some of her customers traveled to St. Louis and Denver to fly elsewhere during spring break.

The TSA is a division of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security that screens passengers and luggage on airlines.

Passengers are asked to arrive at the airport at least 11/2 hours before the flight is scheduled to take off to allow for screening. You might as well drive

Without screening in Salina, Larson said the trip to the Denver could take four to five hours, when driving there from Salina takes six hours.

She said passengers would have to fly to Denver, get their luggage, ride a bus from the tarmac and then go through TSA screening at the Denver airport.

"That's not efficient at all," she said.

Moran said in his newsletter that he met with TSA Administrator Peter Neffenger, Salina Airport Authority Executive Director Tim Rogers and CEO of Great Lakes Airline Doug Voss to discuss the issue of security screening services to Salina Regional Airport.

Rogers said last week that the meeting was productive.

"In addition to the obvious and legitimate safety concerns, no security screening prior to boarding in Salina would force air travelers to be shuttled to the main terminal security checkpoint — a significant time commitment that would routinely result in missed connections," Moran said in his newsletter.

US CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES

U.S. Companies' Demand For Skilled-Worker Visas Tops Last Year's Record

Government gets more than 236,000 applications, exceeding 2015 figures by at least 3,000

By Miriam Jordan

[Wall Street Journal](#), April 12, 2016

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

High-skilled Visa Applications Hit Record High

By Sara Ashley O'Brien

[CNN Money](#), April 12, 2016

This year, 236,000 foreigners applied for the H-1B, the most common visa for high-skilled foreign workers. That's up 3,000 from 2015 – and up significantly more from 2014 which had 172,500 applications.

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services will grant just 85,000 H-1B visas (20,000 of which are reserved for master's degree holders), which it selected on Saturday, April 9, via a lottery process.

For applicants – and employers – the fate of their applications is out of their hands.

"The lottery makes everything very uncertain," said immigration lawyer Tahmina Watson of Watson Immigration Law, who said she was anticipating that the number of applications would indeed be higher this year.

Related: Trump model to immigration law case to U.S. government... but is it too late?

The growing demand is one of the reasons why some regions – Massachusetts, Colorado and most recently New York City – have introduced programs to help applicants get around the H-1B cap. With the help of universities, a select number of H-1B applicants can bypass the annual quotas.

Silicon Valley types have spoken out about the need for high-skilled immigration reform for innovation's sake. Without a pathway to stay in the country, many talented techies could take their ideas and companies elsewhere.

After all, according to a recent study from the National Foundation for American Policy, more than 50% of the U.S.'s "unicorns" – or privately-held companies deemed to be worth \$1 billion or more – had at least one immigrant founder.

Legendary investor Ron Conway spoke about the ongoing need for immigration reform in February.

"28% of new [tech] startups in American are started by immigrants," said Conway.

Conway is one of the original backers of FWD.us, a group focused on immigration reform that was launched by Mark Zuckerberg and other tech CEOs in 2013.

"We have CEOs who can't even stay in the country with the rest of their team. That's the most catastrophic case," added Conway.

Senate To Take Up Controversial EB-5 Visa Program For Foreign Investors

By Graham Vyse

[Inside Sources](#), April 12, 2016

Editor's note: InsideSources is an independent, nonpartisan Washington-based news service. This story was reported in cooperation with The Dallas Morning News.

On the last Thursday in November 1990, President George H.W. Bush walked into a White House ceremony, delivered perfunctory remarks to a smattering of dignitaries and then, surrounded by lawmakers, signed the most comprehensive federal immigration reform in six decades.

With an increase to the number of legal immigrants allowed in the United States, the policy was a big bipartisan accomplishment for the Republican, supported by both parties in Congress and sponsored by no less a liberal Democrat than Massachusetts Sen. Ted Kennedy.

A quarter century later, the reform is still bringing Democrats and Republicans together on Capitol Hill. But it's not for the reasons they'd hoped.

A particular program created by the law is the subject of growing concern on both sides of the political aisle — the EB-

5 initiative giving wealthy foreigners visas in exchange for \$500,000 investments in American businesses.

This Employment-Based Fifth Preference system was intended to boost the economies of underdeveloped rural enclaves and impoverished urban areas, but mounting evidence suggests it's susceptible to misuse.

The State Department reports administering about 10,000 "green cards" through the program annually, yet investment often flows to tony downtown development in places like Dallas, New York and Washington, D.C. Meanwhile, fast-tracking of American citizenship for investors and their families has drawn another criticism — that the program is just one more perk for the privileged in an age of economic inequality.

All of this has transformed an initiative that was hardly utilized until the 2008 financial crisis into a political football, and Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley is set to hold his latest hearing on the program Wednesday. Lawmakers and EB-5 stakeholders are scheduled to give testimony.

The Iowa Republican's proceeding follows a Feb. 2 forum that asked whether the government should even be trying to salvage the system as opposed to simply scrapping it altogether. It's still an open question after a reform bill died during December's budget negotiations.

The timeline of troubles with the EB-5 program began after 2008. Recession meant banks stopped extending as much credit to developers, and the Obama administration promoted foreign investment through the initiative as a fix.

The result was nearly \$2 billion pumped into the U.S. economy each year, 80 percent of which came from China, according to a 2015 report from a pro-EB-5 trade group. "It was a big help in the financial crisis," said American Immigration Lawyers Association president-elect William Stock, who works with EB-5 clients in his own legal practice.

In Dallas, Civitas Capital Group has raised \$500 million in EB-5 investments from more than 1,000 foreign families to finance apartment buildings, hotels, office buildings and restaurants in and around downtown. Its partnership with the city of Dallas is one of more than 600 regional centers around the country. (The Dallas Morning News last profiled Civitas in 2012, when it had raised \$119 million and had just completed the Nylo hotel project south of downtown).

Boosters of the program also point to the 30,000 jobs it reportedly creates each year, including thousands in the Lone Star State cited by Republican Texas Sen. John Cornyn.

"If it weren't for the job growth we've seen in Texas over recent years, the U.S. economy would not be seeing any," Cornyn said at Grassley's February hearing.

Part of the controversy, though, comes from where exactly those jobs are growing. "Despite clear congressional intent to spur immigrants to invest and create jobs in the areas of greatest need," Grassley said, "the [Department of

Homeland Security] has routinely allowed EB-5 money to be invested in projects in affluent urban areas with low unemployment and little shortage of available financing."

Furthermore, a 2015 report from the Government Accountability Office concluded that EB-5 "faced significant challenges in its efforts to detect and mitigate fraud risks." It even suggested the program's economic benefits may be overstated.

Added to these worries are a stream of news reports about EB-5 malfeasance and several Securities and Exchange Commission investigations, which Sen. Diane Feinstein, D-Calif., discussed at length at the February hearing.

An opponent of the entire EB-5 initiative, Feinstein spent her time at the dais reviewing half a dozen alleged fraud cases across the country. In one, a Florida businesswoman used investment money to buy a multi-million dollar home, a 48-foot boat, a BMW and a Mercedes, according to the South Florida Business Journal.

She also argued that America shouldn't be in the business of selling a pathway to citizenship — especially while others are waiting in line.

"The right to immigrate should not be for sale," she said.

Feinstein's position puts her at odds with New York Sen. Chuck Schumer, likely the next leader of the Senate Democrats. He's part of a bipartisan group backing a new EB-5 reform proposal from Sen. Jeff Flake, R-Ariz., but was quick to defend the program as vital to his low-income constituents in the South Bronx.

"To eliminate it, at a time when we're desperate to help people stay in the middle class and get to the middle class, makes no sense," he said.

Some EB-5 defenders are advocating expansion of the program. Stock, the American Immigration Lawyers Association leader, told InsideSources the government should raise its cap of 10,000 visas per year.

"The U.S. has put handcuffs on its economy by saying we only want a certain amount of this investment from overseas," he said. "Let's take the handcuffs off."

On the opposite end of the spectrum is David North, a fellow at the Washington-based Center for Immigration Studies. He insists the law's biggest beneficiaries are "clever American middlemen" who take advantage of Chinese investors.

"It's totally rational for them," he said. "It's totally rational for the developers. It just don't make much sense for the nation as a whole."

Graham Vyse is a reporter for InsideSources. He was previously a staff writer for Washington, D.C.'s Current Newspapers. His work has also been published by the Post, Slate, and NBC News. Born and raised in Rhode Island, Graham received a master's degree in journalism and public affairs from American University in 2013. He was awarded a

IMMIGRATION

IRS Has Illegal Immigration And Taxes Problem

By Naomi Jagoda

[The Hill](#), April 12, 2016

Internal Revenue Service Commissioner John Koskinen said the agency is trying to figure out how to address the issue of illegal immigrants using others' social security numbers — without discouraging them from filing their taxes.

When undocumented workers use other people's SSNs to get jobs and then file their taxes using their IRS-issued individual tax identification numbers, "it's in everybody's interest to have them pay the taxes they owe," Koskinen said Tuesday at a Senate Finance Committee hearing.

The question is whether the social security numbers have been stolen. In many cases, they have been borrowed from friends or acquaintances with permission, Koskinen said.

"It's not the normal identity-theft situation," he said.

Koskinen said the IRS is looking to see if there is a way it can advise people that their SSNs were used fraudulently. In some cases, the IRS may need more authority from Congress to address the matter, he added.

The commissioner's comments were in response to a question from Sen. Dan Coats (R-Ind.), who has been looking into the issue of employment-related identity theft.

Coats said that a couple of months ago, his staff met with staff of the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration. His office learned that the IRS is processing tax returns with false W-2 information, "and it issues refunds as if they were routine tax returns." Also, his office learned that the IRS ignores Social Security Administration notifications of names and numbers that don't match up.

Employers are responsible for penalties if they submit false social-security information, but the IRS and the SSA don't notify companies when there is false information. Victims of employment-related identity theft are also not notified because the IRS is prohibited from informing them, despite the fact that the agency identified 200,000 new cases of employment-related identity theft last year, Coats said.

The Treasury inspector general, Russell George, said his office is "in the process now of assessing this overall issue and expect to issue our report in June of this year." He said the IRS previously had a pilot program to address this issue but it ended.

What Mass Incarceration Problem? US Officials Want Longer Sentences For Border Crossers

By Meredith Hoffman

[Vice](#), April 12, 2016

As US officials use new sentencing guidelines to release drug offenders from federal prison in an effort to reduce the country's massive inmate population, they are taking an opposite approach to the undocumented population: pushing to increase federal prison time for crossing the border.

The US Sentencing Commission (USSC) has proposed to increase sentences for immigrants who illegally re-enter the country after being deported. The cases are a hefty part of the criminal justice system, according to the commission's data, making up a quarter of federal sentencings each year.

The proposed amendment, which the commission is due to vote on this Friday, would raise base sentences for illegal reentry with no other criminal offenses from between zero and six months to between six and 12 months in federal prison. The maximum penalty for the crime — two years — would remain the same, but could theoretically be extended as high 20 years depending on the offender's criminal history.

The Department of Justice has voiced adamant support of the amendment. Michelle Morales, the DOJ's acting director of policy and legislation, submitted comments to the USSC on behalf of the department last month, saying in part, "The Department agrees with the Commission that defendants who are convicted of illegal reentry offenses on multiple prior occasions should receive enhanced punishment, and believes that such offenders should receive enhanced punishment regardless of any other criminal history they may have amassed."

The DOJ noted that 27.2 percent of illegal reentry cases involve individuals who had already been convicted of illegally entering the US, and stated that more needs to be done to deter unauthorized border crossers.

"The need for additional punishment for persistent immigration offenders is plainly evident, and the Department applauds the Commission's action to address this problem," it said.

A spokesperson for Immigration and Customs Enforcement did not respond to requests for comment on the detention of migrants for illegal reentry or on the proposed USSC amendment. A USSC spokesperson emphasized that the commission had not yet issued a final vote on the proposal. "There isn't any evidence we've seen that shows this works."

Immigration advocates argue that harsh reentry penalties have the effect of overburdening prisons and federal courts rather than discouraging illegal border crossings. The commission's amendment would establish

suggested sentences rather than mandatory ones, but federal judges issued more than half of their sentences within the guidelines in 2014, according to the most recent USSC data.

"These are recommendations for judges to follow — they're not mandatory, but they're a very important tool. This is an influential document," said Joshua Breisblatt, a policy analyst with the American Immigration Council.

Harsh illegal reentry convictions have already strained the criminal justice system. According to the Pew Research Center, the cases have been the number one cause of federal prison growth over the past decade. The number of people sentenced in federal court more than doubled between 1992 and 2012, from 36,564 to 75,867 — and the boom in illegal reentry sentences made up 48 percent of that increase. People were once typically deported for illegal reentry, but the most recent USSC data shows that offenders now serve an average of 17 months in prison before their removal from the country.

"You're spending all this money and time filling up prisons, and for what?" Breisblatt asked. "US Customs and Border Protection sees this as part of a consequence delivery system — that there should be some type of consequence beyond being sent back if you cross the border.... But there isn't any evidence we've seen that shows this works. It's unclear what effect it's having when you could be putting them through normal removal proceedings without clogging up the prison system."

Grace Meng, a researcher with Human Rights Watch, agreed that criminal penalties have not deterred undocumented immigrants from repeatedly trying to enter the US. While researching illegal reentry for a 2013 HRW report on border prosecutions, she interviewed dozens of migrants who told her that the prospect of prison sentences did not discourage them.

One of them, a Mexican woman identified in the report by the pseudonym "Alicia," tried to enter the country multiple times after her first deportation because she wanted to be reunited with her two US-born daughters, one of whom had a failing kidney.

"I have not lost the desire to try again," Alicia told Meng as she journeyed north through Mexico after three prior deportations, including two stays in detention.

Many others recounted similar stories.

"Our immigration system hasn't allowed many families to stay together," Meng said. "There are strong humanitarian reasons people have for wanting to be here.... Their motives are not in any way comparable with someone who wants to commit a crime."

With no evidence that prison time has served as a deterrent to future crossings, Chris Rickerd, policy counsel for the ACLU, said that the commission's amendment seemed arbitrary and potentially damaging.

"It's a huge concern for us that there was no justification to increase sentences at the low end of the scale," he said. "It doesn't fit into the administration's national security framework to sweep up people coming here for their family or for work."

Though their only crime is entering the country, undocumented immigrants get sent to some of the worst prisons in the nation called CAR (criminal alien requirement) facilities, Rickerd said. Because the facilities only hold non-citizens who will be deported after their sentences, the federal government does not require the private prison companies that run them to offer social services available in other US prisons.

"Many people who are detained in these facilities are totally unfamiliar with the criminal justice system," Rickerd pointed out. "These facilities are literally warehouses, not geared towards reintegration into society."

As officials debate whether to lock up repeat border crossers for longer stays, advocates are urging a less punitive approach.

"We have a broken immigration system that hasn't allowed families to stay together," Meng said. "The commission should not be trying to increase punishments more for people trying to reunite with their families."

Ricketts Urges 'no' Vote On Immigrant Licensing Bill

[Associated Press](#), April 12, 2016

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska Gov. Pete Ricketts is urging senators to vote against a bill that would allow deferred-action immigrant youth to qualify professional and commercial licenses.

Ricketts sent an open letter to lawmakers Tuesday on the eve of a final vote in the Legislature.

Supporters of the bill say that the youths should have access to the licenses so they can work in professions such as teaching and nursing. The deferred action youths have received lawful status under a policy started by the Obama administration.

Ricketts says the bill undermines the rule of law and is unfair to immigrants, permanent residents and naturalized citizens who followed the legally established process. He says it would also grant licenses to asylum seekers and people with temporary protected status.

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For Immigration Policy, Indiana Senate Panel Looks To Trump Adviser On The Mexico Wall

By Stephanie Wang

[Indianapolis Star](#), April 12, 2016

An Indiana Senate select committee examining immigration issues will hear next week from two well-known lawyers behind some of the nation's strictest proposals against undocumented immigrants.

One is Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach, who recently said he advised Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump on his immigration plan to build a wall at the Mexican border on the Mexican government's dime.

Kobach also helped craft immigration law in Arizona and Alabama, widely regarded as the toughest in the country.

Also testifying before Indiana's immigration committee will be Dale Wilcox, executive director and general counsel of the Immigration Reform Law Institute, a nonprofit policy organization that supports immigration restrictions and has opposed President Barack Obama's executive order to extend legal protections to some undocumented immigrants.

The two conservative immigration lawyers will help provide background on federal and state immigration law at the April 19 inaugural meeting of Indiana's immigration committee. The committee, led by Republican state Sen. Mike Delph of Carmel, plans to hold six meetings and form recommendations for state immigration policy, in regards to both legal and illegal immigration.

"The committee will take a fair and deliberate approach to studying the effects of illegal and legal immigration in Indiana," Delph said in a statement. "This is an important fact-finding process. Committee members are making no prejudgments on these complex issues."

But Senate Democratic Leader Tim Lanane of Anderson said the committee "has been created as a sounding board for anti-immigration policies."

"Rather than kicking off this series of committee meetings by including all stakeholders, leadership has invited two of the most controversial and dangerous voices in immigration policy to date," Lanane said in a statement.

Delph has long been a vocal opponent of illegal immigration. In 2008, he unsuccessfully pushed to require employers to use the federal government's E-Verify system to check workers' immigration status. In 2011, he helped architect a controversial immigration law that in part allowed the arrests of people whose immigration status was questionable — a section of the law that was later deemed unconstitutional.

He said he hopes the committee's work will help vet a failed proposal that he brought up this year, to strip business licenses from employers that knowingly hire undocumented workers.

Delph said he is seeking an update on how much the state spends to support undocumented immigrants. In 2011, Republican Gov. Mitch Daniels' administration estimated that undocumented immigrants cost \$130 million in public dollars, on expenses such as public schools, state prisons, and health care and public assistance programs.

But Delph also said he would invite "folks who haven't been so excited about what I've tried to do in the state" to speak to the committee about their needs and suggestions for immigration reform. That would include, he said, groups such as the Indiana Chamber of Commerce, Indiana Farm Bureau and Indiana Builders Association.

"I'm going to make it very clear what my biases are up front in the opening statements," Delph told IndyStar. "But my biases will not be determinate of the outcomes of the commission."

Delph wants people to share personal stories, too, about becoming naturalized citizens after legally immigrating to the country.

But immigrant advocate Terri Morris Downs, who leads the Immigrant Welcome Center in Indianapolis, said she's "a little worried" about the committee's intent — particularly given the expected testimony from Trump's immigration adviser.

"So what does that say?" she said. "Is this fair and balanced? I don't know. I'm not sure what to think of it."

She said she hoped to be able to provide data showing "the state of Indiana needs immigrants" and looking at the positive economic and cultural effects of immigrants.

The Indiana Senate Select Committee on Immigration Issues meets at 1 p.m. April 19 in Room 431 of the Statehouse, 200 W Washington St. Other meetings are scheduled for the same time and place on May 25, June 15, Aug. 17, Sept. 21 and Nov. 2. All meetings will be live-streamed at in.gov/iga.

US COAST GUARD

US Coast Guard Seizes 550 Pounds Of Cocaine, Detains Man During At-Sea Interdiction

[Space Coast \(FL\) Daily](#), April 12, 2016

US Coast Guard and Dutch law enforcement teams seized 550 pounds of cocaine and detained one man during an at-sea interdiction northwest of Aruba, Saturday.

The seized cocaine shipment was estimated to have a wholesale value of more than \$8.25 million.

While on a joint patrol, members of a U.S. Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment along with the HNLMS De Zeven Provinciën crew detected and interdicted a suspicious vessel northwest of Aruba in international waters.

Following the interdiction, a total of 550 pounds of contraband was discovered onboard the vessel and later tested positive for cocaine.

The U.S. Coast Guard LEDET and HNLMS De Zeven Provinciën crew took custody of the suspect, and seized the vessel and contraband.

The suspect, vessel and contraband were later transferred to another U.S. Coast Guard LEDET working jointly with the USS Shamal.

The U.S. Coast Guard LEDET and USS Shamal crew transferred the suspect and contraband to Panama Express Strike Force agents in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

The suspicious vessel became inoperable during the transit and was sunk as a danger to navigation.

The HNLMS De Zeven Provinciën is a 473-foot Dutch frigate. The USS Shamal is a 174-foot U.S. Navy patrol coastal ship homeported in Mayport, Florida.

Fire Door Problem Grounds New Fathom Ship

By Gene Sloan

[USA Today](#), April 12, 2016

Start-up cruise line Fathom's first voyage has been canceled due to a problem with the fire doors on its single ship.

The U.S. Coast Guard in Miami prevented the 710-passenger Adonia from beginning the trip on Sunday, four days after a routine inspection first turned up safety issues with the vessel. Adonia was scheduled to travel to the Dominican Republic.

"The cruise ship failed several portions of the (inspection)," the Coast Guard said in a statement issued Tuesday. "The most serious remaining problem is with numerous sliding fire screen doors that are inoperable."

Created by industry giant Carnival Corp., Fathom has been designed to specialize in "social impact" vacations. The line initially plans to offer seven-night sailings to the Dominican Republic where passengers will take part in volunteer projects during port calls. It also soon will begin Cuba sailings.

The Adonia is a 15-year-old vessel that formerly sailed overseas for Britain's P&O Cruises.

The Coast Guard requires foreign-flagged passenger ships such as Adonia to undergo an initial safety inspection before operating out of the USA. The inspection involves the testing of navigational, lifesaving and firefighting equipment, and the Coast Guard also tests crew proficiency with emergency procedures. Ships that successfully pass the inspection are issued an Initial Certificate of Compliance.

It is rare that a ship from a major cruise company is prevented from sailing due to deficiencies found by the Coast Guard. Perhaps the most notably similar incident in recent decades took place in 2001, when Norwegian Cruise Line's Norway was held in Miami for repairs to its fire sprinkler system.

Fathom says the problems are being addressed and the ship's next voyage, scheduled to begin on April 17, will take place as planned.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY **DIRECTORATE**

DHS And CBP Announces Homeland Security Technology Day In Silicon Valley

[Homeland Preparedness News](#), April 12, 2016

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) announced on Thursday that they will host a Homeland Security Day in Silicon Valley on April 29.

The goal of the technology day is to bring together CBP and DHS officials with experts and stakeholders from across the tech industry to discuss opportunities to increase the government's ability to use technology to ensure the safety of officers and citizens traveling across the world.

"Today's technology is being rapidly and continuously advanced by start-ups, entrepreneurs and small businesses," DHS Under Secretary for Science and Technology Dr. Reginald Brothers said. "Our Homeland Security Day in Silicon Valley and similar events in other locations allow DHS S&T to strengthen partnerships and discuss some of the Department's toughest challenges with these important players in the tech industry."

CBP employs more people than any other federal agency in the U.S., reportedly processing more than a one million international travelers and more than 72,000 cargo containers a day, while its agents patrol thousands of miles of border with aircraft, vehicles, vessels, and horses and canines.

"Steady growth in international trade and travel drives U.S. Customs and Border Protection to innovate the way we provide security and facilitate commerce across our borders," Deputy Commissioner Kevin McAleenan said. "We are excited to pursue new partnerships in Silicon Valley as we seek more efficient and effective capabilities across our diverse operational environments."

TERRORISM INVESTIGATIONS

White House Won't Commit To Declassifying Secret 9/11 Report

By Dave Boyer

[Washington Times](#), April 12, 2016

Ahead of President Obama's trip to Saudi Arabia next week, the White House sidestepped questions Tuesday about whether the president supports declassifying 28 pages omitted from a joint commission's report on the 9/11 terrorist attacks that reportedly implicate the Saudis.

White House press secretary Josh Earnest said Mr. Obama “certainly has confidence” that Director of National Intelligence James R. Clapper will consider the documents for release as part of an ongoing declassification review. But he wouldn’t say whether the president has read the secret pages, or whether Mr. Obama believes they should be made public.

The president’s spokesman said Mr. Obama is hopeful that the question will be resolved before he leaves office.

The 28 pages are believed to detail links between Saudi Arabian officials and the 9/11 hijackers — 15 of 19 of whom were Saudi citizens. A CIA watchdog report last year found no evidence that the Saudi government “knowingly and willingly” supported al Qaeda’s attack.

But many lawmakers who have read the 28 pages say they point to heavy Saudi involvement in the 9/11 attacks. Members of Congress are permitted to read the documents, alone, but aren’t allowed to copy them.

“I think it is implausible to believe that 19 people, most of whom didn’t speak English, most of whom had never been in the United States before, many of whom didn’t have a high school education — could’ve carried out such a complicated task without some support from within the United States,” Sen. Bob Graham, Florida Democrat, told 60 Minutes on Sunday.

Reps. Walter Jones, North Carolina Republican, and Rep. Stephen Lynch, Massachusetts Democrat, are trying to have the documents declassified.

The president’s visit to Saudi Arabia on April 21 will be focused on U.S. cooperation with the kingdom and other Gulf states in the fight against the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq. Implementation of the administration’s nuclear deal with Iran, which has angered the Saudis, is also likely to be on the agenda.

Rep. Nolan Leads Effort To Push President To Declassify 9/11 Report Details

By Allison Sherry

[Minneapolis Star Tribune](#), April 12, 2016

WASHINGTON — Democratic U.S. Rep. Rick Nolan spent a few weeks last fall writing letters asking for access to a classified 28-page document that talks about who financed the Saudi Arabian Al-Qaida terrorists who attacked the World Trade Center and Pentagon on Sept. 11, 2001.

Nolan got permission from House leaders to read the report and now wants everyone to be able to read what he did.

“I would question somewhat the sensitivity of all this. It may be more embarrassing than sensitive ... for all the parties involved,” said Nolan, who read the report in a secure room in the basement of the U.S. Capitol that bans phones, cameras and recording devices.

Nolan, as well as a North Carolina Republican and several members of the House Intelligence Committee, are pushing President Obama to use executive authority to declassify the 28 pages, which he says clearly points out who furnished money and resources to those at least partly responsible for the terrorist attacks.

Nolan says transparency is important because it further illustrates “who our friends are and who are enemies are.”

Nolan and GOP Rep. Walter Jones of North Carolina are leading a House resolution urging that the pages be unsealed — 42 members of Congress are in support so far.

The chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, GOP Rep. Devin Nunes, said Tuesday that the “benefits of publishing this information would outweigh any potential damage to America’s national security.”

The history of the sealed documents stretches back to the early 2000s when the pages were originally part of the 9/11 Commission Report, which was published in 2003. The Bush administration struck the pages from the report, saying that the details were classified. Various politicians and former members of the former 9/11 Commission have been pushing to get the details declassified for years.

On the morning of Sept. 11, 2001, 19 men hijacked four commercial airplanes and committed terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington, D.C.; the fourth plane was taken down in rural Pennsylvania.

Of the 19 men, 15 were from Saudi Arabia. Members of the former 9/11 Commission and many politicians found it hard to believe that the men were able to establish themselves in the U.S. — most with limited English and limited educations — and learn how to speak English and learn to fly by enrolling in American flight schools without outside help.

Zacarias Moussaoui, a French citizen, pleaded guilty in U.S. federal court to conspiring to kill Americans as part of the Sept. 11 attacks. He attended flight school in Oklahoma and then Minnesota before he was arrested on immigration charges. He drew suspicion after asking flight instructors in Minnesota to teach him how to fly a Boeing 747.

There has been a review underway since 2014 about the secret 28 pages, and Obama administration officials say they are committed to more transparency.

Several members of the former 9/11 Commission — including former Florida Sen. Bob Graham and former CIA Director Porter Goss — have requested that the documents be unsealed.

“It is significant that the people who led the joint inquiry all agree the 28 pages should be declassified and shouldn’t have been classified in the first place,” Jones said. “I will continue to work to see the 28 pages declassified so the American people will know the truth about Saudi involvement in the 9/11 attacks.”

Earlier this week, White House press secretary Josh Earnest said he didn't know whether Obama has reviewed the documents or how long it would take to decide whether the information would be declassified.

"I can tell you that the president certainly does support being as transparent as possible, but he also believes that these national security officials have an important job to do to make sure that if secrets need to be kept that they can be," he said. "This is part of a vigorous bureaucratic debate. And I know that 'bureaucratic' often has a negative connotation. I don't necessarily mean it that way. I just mean that there are well-intentioned individuals with different points of view who can arrive at different conclusions."

Terror Suspect Wants To Be Released To Gwinnett County

By Tyler Estep And David Wickert

[Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#), April 12, 2016

An Ohio native accused of providing financial support to an al Qaeda leader is asking to be released on bail before his trial — so he can be placed under home confinement in Gwinnett County.

Asif Ahmed Salim, 35, was charged last November in a federal indictment that accuses him and three others of raising money through fraudulent credit card charges and sending the funds to Anwar al-Awlaki, whom the Department of Justice referred to as "a key leader of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula." The scheme took place over about seven years beginning in 2005, the Associated Press previously reported.

al-Awlaki was killed in a drone strike in Yemen in 2011.

Salim was already denied bail earlier this year, but his attorney, Linda Moreno, filed a new motion Saturday in U.S. District Court in Toledo, Ohio, calling him "neither a risk of flight nor a danger to the community."

The filing echoes the requests of January's failed bail motion — that he be released to his wife's family's home in Duluth, which would also be put up to ensure his appearance in court — but adds a third "custodian" that would be responsible for his supervision.

That custodian is Gwinnett County Assistant District Attorney Sabrina Nizam, his sister-in-law.

"Ms. Nizam has a personal abiding self-interest in making sure Mr. Salim complies with all conditions of release this Court would set, given that her family home, built by her parents, is at stake," the filing said. "She will testify before this Honorable Court about her ability, and that of her mother and sister, to faithfully monitor and control as humanly possible, Mr. Salim's compliance with conditions of release."

Gwinnett District Attorney Danny Porter said Nizam told him about the situation late last year. He said he has no opinion about whether her brother-in-law should be released.

But he said he's known Nizam since she interned in his office in high school, college and law school.

"Of the top 10 people in the universe that I trust, she's on that list," Porter said.

Porter said he also knows her family, but not her brother-in-law, and doesn't know if the allegations against him are true. But he said he trusts the judicial system and said Salim is innocent until prove guilty.

"Even if (the allegations are) proven to be true, I don't think it reflects on Sabrina," Porter said. "It doesn't affect her job or my perception of her loyalty."

Messages left with a spokesperson for U.S. District Court in Toledo were not immediately returned Tuesday afternoon.

Terror Suspect In Brooklyn Court Accused Of High-level Ties To Al Qaeda, Other Terrorist Groups

By John Marzulli, New York Daily News

[New York Daily News](#), April 12, 2016

An accused Al Qaeda goon awaiting trial in Brooklyn Federal Court for conspiring to kill U.S. troops overseas had contact with top officials of the terrorist organization and participated in an ambush attack that left two servicemen dead on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, prosecutors have disclosed.

Ibrahim Suleiman Adnan Harun was extradited from Italy three years ago on the condition that he would not face the death penalty in connection with the deaths of Private 1st Class Jerod Dennis and Airman 1st Class Raymond Losano who were killed in action on April 25, 2003.

Harun, who was wounded in the firefight, dropped his personal copy of the Koran on the battlefield and the FBI later identified his fingerprint on the holy book, according to court papers.

Federal prosecutors in Brooklyn have publicly revealed for the first time stunning details of the accused jihadist's involvement not only with Al Qaeda, but with Boko Haram in Nigeria and the Algerian terror group GSPC.

He openly discussed his hatred of the U.S. with Italian authorities. "The defendant was present in Afghanistan on Sept. 11, 2001 and joined the celebrations of Al Qaeda jihadists as news of the attacks in New York and Washington spread," Assistant U.S. Attorneys Shreve Ariail, Melody Wells, and Matthew Jacobs stated in court papers.

Harun, 46, is being held under the tightest jail restrictions ordered by U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch for the most dangerous terrorists.

Al Qaeda allegedly bestowed upon Harun the nom de guerre "Spin Ghul," which is Pashto for "White Rose" — a jihadi name previously used by a Somali martyr, the prosecutors say.

Harun is a high value captive because he has had contacts with a who's who of Al Qaeda officials, including military commander Abdul Hadi; operations chief Abu Faraj; Ramzi bin al-Shibh; Ahmed Ghailani, Abu Zubaydah; and propaganda shill Adam Gadhafi.

Harun "has extraordinary connections to Al Qaeda, including to several of its most significant leaders, some reportedly deceased, others in custody at Guantanamo Bay, and to at least two other jihadist terror organizations," the feds say.

Harun was allegedly plotting bombings against Europe when he was captured in Libya in 2005. He was sprung from prison before Libyan strongman Col. Muammar Gaddafi's ouster, and fled on an Italian ship for Lampedusa. Harun was recaptured on the vessel and extensively debriefed.

Last week Harun refused to come to court, and has not been present in court for months because of his disruptive behavior.

In addition to admitting many of his crimes, he has demanded return of his Koran, and wants a military trial at Guantanamo. "F--- you judge...I am a warrior and the war is not over. Our terrorism is not over," he told Judge Edward Korman in open court, according to papers.

Harun's lawyer declined to comment.

Key Federal Witness In Minnesota ISIL Investigation Is Arrested After Gun Incident

By Stephen Montemayor

[Minneapolis Star Tribune](#), April 12, 2016

A key informant in the government's case against a group of young Twin Cities men accused of conspiracy to support ISIL was arrested last week on probable cause of illegally possessing a handgun, according to court documents filed this week.

He was released the next day, pending the filing of charges.

Abdirahman Abdi Rashiid Bashiir, 20, was at a Minneapolis apartment visiting friends late Friday evening when a semiautomatic handgun discharged accidentally as he attempted to modify it, according to a source familiar with the investigation. One bullet lodged into the wall and no one was injured.

Police were notified and placed Bashiir under arrest. He was released from Hennepin County jail by 4 p.m. Saturday pending a criminal complaint, jail records show. According to a police report, officers recovered a firearm, magazines, shell casings, other rounds and a holster.

Reached by phone Tuesday, Bashiir said he couldn't comment on the incident but characterized it as "some kind of misunderstanding."

"It doesn't have anything to do with the other case or my involvement," Bashiir said, referring to the ongoing ISIL

recruit case in which he has cooperated with federal authorities. "I'm still a U.S. citizen. Whatever I do, I don't get no special treatment."

FBI and U.S. attorney's office spokesmen declined to comment on the arrest.

Originally a co-conspirator along with a half-dozen friends who allegedly attempted to travel to Syria to fight with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Bashiir instead turned informant in early 2015.

Bashiir moved with family to Minnesota from San Diego in 2012 and was reportedly seen back in California last summer. He said Tuesday he "was just kind of [in Minneapolis] on a little visit. I might not be here long."

Bashiir, who remains under FBI protection, said he was still trying to finish school and decide what to do about his future. He said that, at one point on Friday, he encountered a group of local Somali-American residents who recognized him, but both sides went their own way without incident.

He said Tuesday that he expected to be called to testify at the May trial of the case's five remaining defendants.

Attempt to join Al-Shabab

In a separate development this week, federal prosecutors alleged that at least some of the five Minnesota men set for trial in May on the ISIL charges had shown a previous interest in Al-Shabab, the terror group based in Somalia.

In court filings, the prosecutors say they want to show a jury evidence of a thwarted 2012 attempt by one to go to East Africa.

By the time authorities arrested Guled Omar and charged him and five others last April with conspiring to go to Syria to fight for ISIL, the 21-year-old had allegedly already made three failed attempts in three years to fight abroad. Late Monday, prosecutors filed a request to show a jury evidence he first tried to join the nearly two dozen local Somali-Americans who left for Al-Shabab since the late 2000s.

According to court documents, Omar helped drive two men to Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport in July 2012, knowing that they planned to join Al-Shabab, and planned to follow them to Somalia a month later. His passengers, Mohamed Guled Osman and Omar Ali Farah, have each been charged with providing material support to a foreign terror organization and are considered fugitives.

Prosecutors also say Abdirizak Warsame, who pleaded guilty in February to plotting to support ISIL after being charged late last year, will tell jurors that Osman, also known as "Bashi," was an "inspiration to the Syrian travelers" and that Omar and co-defendant Abdirahman Daud pledged allegiance to him, promising to join him in Somalia.

Agents stopped Omar in August 2012 as he tried to board a plane for Kenya, where he allegedly planned to cross over into Somalia. Omar told them he was traveling to get married in Africa, according to court documents.

Glenn Bruder, Omar's attorney, said Tuesday that the attempted travel in 2012 was "perfectly legitimate" and that he planned to argue its relevance before trial.

"It would distract the jury from the focal point of the case, which is whether or not three years later [Omar] attempted to join ISIL," Bruder said. "What he's being charged with in this indictment involved actions in 2014 and 2015, not 2012, and that's what the jury should consider."

Incident shows intent

But in their filing, prosecutors said the 2012 evidence would be necessary to outline Omar's intent, should he argue that his later attempted trips to San Diego were "innocent in nature."

"All incidents involve evidence of attempted travel out of Minnesota with the goal of joining a designated foreign terrorist organization," Assistant U.S. Attorney Andrew Winter said in the filing.

The five remaining defendants — Omar, Daud, Hamza Ahmed and brothers Adnan and Mohamed Farah — are scheduled to stand trial beginning May 9.

At the heart of the case against them is where they allegedly set their sights after Omar's failed 2012 travel plans: Syria. Relatives stopped a May 2014 attempt by Omar to ride to California with a co-conspirator turned informant and Yusuf Jama, who pressed on with his plans to leave the country and hasn't been seen since. Agents again stopped Omar from boarding a flight to San Diego later that year, something he lamented in recorded phone calls with the informant.

"That's gonna be the worst image for me, bro," Omar allegedly said. "Like [expletive] you tried fifty times and it still don't work out. ... Three times, the exact same thing."

Al Qaeda Suspect Awaits Trial, Warned 'War Is Not Over'

By Ray Sanchez

[CNN](#), April 12, 2016

New York (CNN)Al Qaeda suspect Ibrahim Suleiman Adnan Adam Harun, who awaits trial on federal charges in New York, has declared that "our terrorism is not over" and "threatened to kill" prosecutors and courthouse personnel, according to a government memorandum in the case.

"I am a warrior, and the war is not over," Harun said during a 2013 court appearance in Brooklyn, according to the court document.

Federal prosecutors have asked a district court judge for an anonymous and partially sequestered jury in the trial of man who allegedly has extensive contacts among ranking al Qaeda members and participated in a 2003 ambush that killed two American soldiers and wounded several others.

A trial date has not been set; a status hearing is scheduled for April 29.

Harun was seriously injured in the April 2003 machine gun and grenade ambush attack at a U.S. military base in Afghanistan.

Pfc. Jerod Dennis, 19, of Oklahoma, and Airman 1st Class Raymond Losano, 24, of Arizona, were killed in the attack, according to the court document.

Harun was able to escape across the border into Pakistan, and U.S. soldiers later recovered a small brown Quran near the scene of firefight, the government memorandum said. FBI experts about 10 years later identified his fingerprints on the holy book.

Lawyers for Harun have not responded to a request for comment.

'White Rose' indicted in 2012

A federal grand jury indicted Harun — whose nom de guerre is Spin Ghul, a Pashto name meaning "White Rose" — in February 2012 on charges that included conspiracy to murder U.S. nationals, conspiracy to attack a government facility and provision of material support to al Qaeda.

The charges stem from Harun's alleged membership in al Qaeda from 2001 to 2011 and his position as an external operative in West Africa from 2003 to 2005, court documents said.

The memorandum said Harun's alleged al Qaeda contacts included:

- Abdul Hadi al-Iraqi, one of the late Osama bin Laden's deputies and a top military commander in Afghanistan.

- Hamza Rabia, a senior al Qaeda official in Pakistan who oversaw operatives and attacks outside the Afghanistan-Pakistan region.

- Ramzi bin al-Shibh, who was directly involved in the September 11, 2001, attacks

- Adam Gadahn, a top English-speaking member of al Qaeda's propaganda department.

Harun, who claims to be a citizen of Niger, allegedly joined the terror organization shortly before the 9-11 attacks and joined other jihadists who celebrated the attacks in Afghanistan, the court document said.

Taken into custody on the high seas

In June 2011, Harun was taken into custody by Italian authorities on a ship carrying 1,200 North African refugees from an island on the Mediterranean Sea to the Italian mainland, the court document said.

Harun allegedly told Italian authorities that he was an al Qaeda member and had sought to enter Europe in 2005 to carry out an attack "superior to the September 11, 2001, attacks," according to the memorandum. The reason, he said: "Europe agrees with American politics."

In September 2012, Italian authorities granted a U.S. extradition request as long as the government did not seek the death penalty against Harun, the court document said.

The memorandum said Harun has been “openly hostile and belligerent” in court and has challenged the authority of a federal judge.

“God is the only judge,” he has told the court, according to the court document.

Described in the memorandum as “aggressive, prideful and contemptuous,” Harun responded to a judge who said he didn’t have the authority to transfer him to an international or military tribunal with the words, “F--- you, judge.”

The new details in the case emerged in the government’s memorandum of law in support of a motions for an anonymous and partially sequestered jury.

The court document quotes Harun in a 2013 letter to the U.N. Secretary-General as writing, “I have not declared it nor have I abandoned the idea of Jihad for the sake of Allah.”

“Likewise, outside of court, the defendant has threatened to kill the prosecutors assigned to this case along with other courthouse personnel,” the document said.

CNN’s Laura Ly contributed to this story.

U.S. Air Strikes Kill Suspected Al Shabaab Militants In Somalia

[Reuters](#), April 12, 2016

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

FBI Director Reflects On Apple Dispute

By Kevin Johnson

[USA Today](#), April 12, 2016

WASHINGTON — FBI Director James Comey said the collision of privacy and national security interests revealed in the agency’s legal battle with Apple Inc., posed “the hardest problem I’ve encountered in my entire government career.”

Comey said the serious policy issues raised in the Apple litigation underscored a belief that the problems cannot be resolved in the courts.

Late last month, the FBI withdrew its case against the tech giant demanding it assist in unlocking the encrypted iPhone of Syed Farook — one of the gunmen in the December mass shooting in San Bernardino, Calif. — after an outside party assisted the government in hacking the device.

“I’m glad the litigation is gone,” Comey told students at Catholic University’s Law School, adding that the “emotion around that issue was not productive.”

“Apple is not a demon; I hope people don’t perceive the FBI as a demon.”

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Comey: FBI, Apple Court Clash Created Unproductive ‘Emotion’

By Eric Tucker

[Associated Press](#), April 12, 2016

WASHINGTON (AP) – FBI Director James Comey said Tuesday he was glad a court fight in California over access to a locked iPhone had ended because it “was creating an emotion around the issue that was not productive,” likening the emotion and passion around the discussion to the debate over gun control.

Comey told an audience of Catholic University law school students that the FBI was correct to ask a judge to force Apple Inc. to help it hack into the phone used by a gunman in the December mass killing in San Bernardino, California.

“That litigation,” he said, “had to be brought, in my view, because that case had to be investigated in a reasonable way.”

But generally speaking, Comey said, lawsuits and court fights won’t resolve the broader collision between privacy and national security. He said he regretted that the San Bernardino case in particular had “created an emotion around the issue that was not productive.”

“We can’t resolve these really important issues that affect our values – technology, innovation, safety and all kinds of other things – in litigation,” he said.

The Justice Department last month told a magistrate judge that it had managed to access the phone of Syed Farook – though it didn’t say how – effectively ending the case. The FBI is examining the device, but officials have not revealed whether any useful information has been recovered, and they have not said whether they will share with Apple the method they used to break into the phone.

Comey said one “unintended benefit” of the Apple case has been greater public dialogue and engagement about the balance between privacy and security. But he said he hoped “some of the emotion would come down” and that the dialogue was not well-served by “being tweeted about” or being spoken of in absolutes.

“Some of the emotion that I’ve received around this issued remind me sometimes, in the absolutist and slippery slope arguments, reminds me of some of the rhetoric we hear in the gun debate,” he said.

Comey said the debate would continue given that there are “plenty” of cases affected by encryption. The Justice Department last week said that it would continue trying to force Apple to reveal an iPhone’s data in a New York City drug case.

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Two More Suspects Charged In Investigation Of Brussels Attacks

By James McAuley

[Washington Post](#), April 12, 2016

PARIS — The Belgian federal prosecutor announced Tuesday that two more suspects have been charged in connection with last month's terrorist attacks on the Brussels airport and subway system.

Prosecutors said the men — initially identified only as Ibrahim F., born in 1988, and Samil F., born in 1984 — were linked to the rental of an apartment in Brussels that appeared to serve as a safe house before the March 22 attacks that killed 32 people.

Investigators suspect Khalid el-Bakraoui, 27, may have left the apartment before he detonated a suicide bomb on a Brussels metro train at the Maelbeek station, near the headquarters of the European Union. Earlier, twin suicide blasts struck Brussels Airport.

In recent weeks, Belgian authorities have made a series of arrests linked to a Brussels-based cell that planned the attacks in the Belgian capital and a deadly rampage in November in Paris that killed 130. Both attacks have been claimed by the Islamic State.

Also Tuesday, Belgian authorities detained three suspects outside Brussels in connection with the November attacks. According to the Belgian federal prosecutor, a judge will decide Wednesday whether to continue holding the suspects.

After Salah Abdeslam, 26, an architect of the Paris attacks, was arrested in the Brussels neighborhood of Molenbeek last month, ties between the Paris and Brussels attacks have become increasingly clear.

The attacks, the deadliest on French and Belgian soil since World War II, were both ultimately the work of a terrorist cell rooted in French-speaking Europe. The Paris attack was largely planned from Brussels, where many of the suspects were raised. Likewise, several perpetrators of the Brussels attacks last month were involved in the earlier attack on the French capital, investigators have said.

A key suspect arrested Friday, Mohamed Abrini, 31, the "man in the hat" seen in surveillance video before the Brussels Airport blasts, was also spotted by cameras driving one of the alleged Paris attackers across the French-Belgian border before the Nov. 13 attacks in the French capital.

On Sunday, prosecutors said the terrorist cell — a web of predominately young, European-born men quietly radicalized within Europe — initially planned a second attack on France but chose to act in Brussels, believing they were about to be snared by an intensifying investigation.

Belgian authorities have not released any specific information on the apparently abandoned French attack. A

representative of the Belgian federal prosecutor did not respond to repeated requests for comment.

Two More Charged Over Brussels Attacks

By Kim Hjelmgaard

[USA Today](#), April 12, 2016

Two more men were charged Tuesday with offenses related to the Brussels bombings.

Belgium's Federal Prosecutor's office said the suspects, identified only as Smail F. and Ibrahim F., were involved in renting an apartment in an area of Brussels that served as a hideout for the bomber who attacked the Brussels subway as well as a suspected accomplice.

Sixteen victims died in the March 22 attack, the same day a pair of suicide bombers also killed 16 victims at Brussels airport.

The statement said no further information would be released, and that the investigation "is continuing actively day and night."

At least six people were previously charged in connection with the attacks, including Mohamed Abrini, the suspect widely known as the "man in the hat."

Boko Haram Is Forcing More Children To Carry Out Suicide Bombings

By Kevin Sieff

[Washington Post](#), April 12, 2016

NAIROBI — In the last two years, Boko Haram militants have increasingly turned to a new tactic in their attacks in West Africa: child suicide bombers.

The number of children involved in such blasts grew more than tenfold, from four in 2014 to 44 in 2015, according to a report released by the U.N. children's agency on Tuesday. And more than three-quarters of the children are girls — some as young as 8 years old.

The accounts by UNICEF add another chilling view into the atrocities blamed on the Boko Haram group, which has conducted mass kidnappings of children, including more than 200 school girls abducted from a boarding school in northern Nigeria two years ago.

Some girls and women who escaped have claimed that captives face sexual abuse and forced marriages.

"Let us be clear: These children are victims, not perpetrators," said Manuel Fontaine, UNICEF's regional director for West and Central Africa, in a statement. "Deceiving children and forcing them to carry out deadly acts has been one of the most horrific aspects of the violence in Nigeria and in neighboring countries."

Offensives by security forces in Nigeria, Cameroon and Chad have forced the Islamist group from most of the territory it once controlled. In response, Boko Haram has conducted a growing number of attacks on civilian targets, killing hundreds of people in recent months.

The report also reflects Boko Haram's push in recent years outside its former strongholds in northern Nigeria. Nearly half the child suicide attacks, 21, were in neighboring Cameroon, it said.

But both Nigerian officials and international aid groups have struggled to explain the reason for the surge in child attackers.

Although young suicide bombers are used in other conflict zones, the rise in Boko Haram's case is stunning. Since 2014, 20 percent of all suicide bombings carried out by the group have been children, according to UNICEF.

Some of the children were abducted by Boko Haram from their homes, and their bodies were identified months later from remains after suicide attacks. Last month, a young girl blew herself up in a mosque in the northern Ni-ger-ian city of Maiduguri, killing at least 22 people. Her identity has not yet been determined.

The Nigerian military, for its part, has come to treat children abducted by Boko Haram as threats no different from adults. Boys have appeared on "wanted posters" across northeastern Nigeria — once the stronghold for the group — along with dozens of top Boko Haram suspects.

"Banditry knows no age," said Maj. Gen. Lucky Irabor, the top military official in the northeast, when a Washington Post reporter asked about the boys on the poster.

But according to UNICEF, many of the attacks are conducted involuntarily. "Boys are forced to attack their own families to demonstrate their loyalty to Boko Haram," the report said.

Hundreds of girls, meanwhile, have been taken captive by the group.

"The calculated use of children, who may have been coerced into carrying bombs, has created an atmosphere of fear and suspicion that has devastating consequences for girls who have survived captivity and sexual violence by Boko Haram in North East Nigeria," said UNICEF's report.

In a separate report from Human Rights Watch released Tuesday, researchers said that "Nigeria's security forces have contributed to the problem by using schools as military bases, putting children at further risk of attack from the Islamist armed group."

Human Rights Watch also reported that "at least 611 teachers have been deliberately killed."

Nearly 1.3 million schoolchildren have been displaced by the conflict, according to UNICEF, including 5,000 children separated from their parents.

And violence is not the only threat facing children in the region. By January, 195,000 children were suffering from severe acute malnutrition.

Citing Health Concerns, Marine General Bans War Court Defense Staff From Living At Guantánamo's Camp Justice

By Carol Rosenberg

[Miami Herald](#), April 12, 2016

The general overseeing Guantánamo war court defense teams has issued an order forbidding his staff to sleep at the Camp Justice compound following a new health risk assessment on cancer-causing agents there.

Marine Brig. Gen. John Baker issued the order over the weekend in an email obtained by the Miami Herald. It just so happens that the Sept. 11 judge, for unrelated reasons, canceled this week's pretrial hearing, meaning few if any staff are at the crude compound built atop an obsolete airstrip at the remote U.S. Navy base in Cuba.

"At this time, the potential cancer risk and non-cancer health effects associated with Camp Justice and any final conclusions [and risk management actions] cannot be determined," according to a new Navy-Marine Corps risk assessment dated Feb. 23 that just surfaced.

Baker notified staff Monday night that they are forbidden to stay at the trailer park where U.S. military defense personnel are typically housed "until I am provided a clearer explanation of the health risks associated with living at Camp Justice, and how any remedial measures will mitigate those risks." The general, however, did not forbid staff from working on the site, where the Pentagon Office of Military Commissions has special classified computers and trailers to handle National Security documents.

U.S. military health teams have been evaluating the safety of living and working at the site since a Naval Reserves officer filed a complaint with the Pentagon Inspector General's Office July 14 citing seven instances of civilians and service members who contracted a variety of cancers and had spent time at Camp Justice. One of the seven, Lt. Cmdr. William Kuebler, had cancer of the appendix and died days after the officer filed the complaint.

A preliminary Aug. 14 study dismissed the notion of a cancer cluster, saying the incidents and types of cancers among former staff were too disparate and declared the compound "habitable for occupancy." A follow-up military and civilian consulting team then took air and soil samples at the site and searched historical records for the Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center, which produced the latest, inconclusive 29-page "Health Screening Risk Assessment."

The report listed a series of health concerns, including the presence of mercury in a building once used as detention center headquarters that years earlier functioned as a dental clinic; formaldehyde in indoor air samples; excess bromodichloromethane and chloroform in two showers; arsenic in soil samples on the site where some work court personnel and temporary visitors are housed in a tent city and

adjoining trailer park, and PCBs in and around a ramshackle hangar where journalists and troops work and attorneys brief the media.

It also echoed early acknowledgments of asbestos in older buildings where legal staff work on the site, referenced an Aug. 14, Miami Herald report, and added the asbestos containing material is "generally non-hazardous if it is undisturbed."

The chief war crimes prosecutor, an Army general, said he and his staff will continue to live in the crude Camp Justice.

It was dated Feb. 23 and released to some war court staff on April 1 — the same day the chief Guantánamo judge canceled this month's 9/11 session citing a sealed filing from the Justice Department. Baker, who would not discuss his order when reached by telephone Tuesday, visited the base April 8, was briefed on the findings and sent out the initial order Saturday at 9:30 a.m.

The possibility of a cancer connection has stirred anxiety among war court employees for months. "We won't be working there. And absent further information, I don't anticipate returning to that courtroom," said former Air Force Maj. Michael Schwartz, a defense attorney for one of the alleged Sept. 11 plotters on Tuesday morning as he boarded a flight from Jacksonville for Guantánamo.

He and his colleagues had already obtained housing away from the war court compound for this week's client visit, he said. Schwartz, who has worked out of Camp Justice since 2012, recently resigned his Air Force commission to remain on the case.

The courtroom, a \$12 million snoop-proof, maximum-security building that looks like a warehouse, is built atop the obsolete McCalla air field between a trailer park known as "the Cuzcos," offices, a tent city and the hangar. In the 1990s the site was used as a migrant camp for Cuban families picked up at sea during the rafter crisis.

The Bush-era Pentagon built the Camp Justice compound in 2007 and 2008, at an obsolete airfield. When the Obama administration reformed the court, it kept it.

The Pentagon built the Camp Justice compound in 2007 and 2008, far from the Detention Center Zone currently holding 89 captives run by a 2,000-member staff. At the time, the Bush administration was planning to ramp up war crimes trials at the base after bringing 15 former high-value captives from CIA black sites to Guantánamo's secret Camp 7 prison. President Barack Obama reformed the war court, and kept the compound.

The next war court session is scheduled for May 11-12 when former CIA captive Majid Khan is due in court to update his guilty plea on terrorism charges and for his lawyers to question a new Army judge assigned to the case. Another short hearing, in the case of alleged al-Qaida commander Abd al Hadi al Iraqi, is scheduled for the following week.

Meantime, with no court sessions underway, General Baker said through the Pentagon spokesman that it involved moving 10 defense team members "to other housing facilities on Naval Station Guantánamo Bay because of his views of a recent Navy preliminary environmental report about Camp Justice."

The Pentagon's chief war crimes prosecutor, Army Brig. Gen. Mark Martins, said Tuesday morning that he and his staff would continue to live and work out of Camp Justice. "The prosecution, which uses Camp Justice and the nearby living areas heavily, will have an administrative section there soon to prepare for hearings in the Khan and Hadi cases," he said by email. "All prosecution personnel are being kept informed of the ongoing official measures to inspect the working environment and ensure health and welfare."

Khan attorney Wells Dixon of the Center for Constitutional Rights called the report "another compelling reason why Guantánamo should be closed without delay."

"No service member or civilian should be subjected to these sorts of health risks under any circumstances, including because Obama is unwilling to use his full legal authority to close the prison," Dixon said by email. "It's hard enough representing Guantánamo detainees without having to worry about getting cancer or other serious diseases."

The report also said "there appears to be uncertainty regarding what exact occupational and environment standards (and monitoring) apply" at Camp Justice because, although on a permanent base, the war court compound's status is "expeditionary," essentially temporary.

Successive Air Force engineering units on temporary assignment have tinkered with the infrastructure, moving tents and trailers, adding some, removing others, arranging and rearranging orange barriers, barbed wire and sniper fencing. Some Air Force engineers slept there, but no longer do. Reporters covering the trials and hearings and legal observers brought down as guests of the Pentagon sleep in tents not far from the lawyers' trailer park.

The report recommends that the Office of Military Commissions as well as the Southern Command, whose detention center staff has a role in managing the site, "provide more granularity on exposure durations" of people who work and live at the Expeditionary Legal Complex known as the ELC.

Efforts to assess the health risks there are also hampered by insufficient historical records, the study found, about "chemicals of concern" on everything from locations of fuel tanks to "potential spills or releases to the environment" of earlier flight-line solvent and fuel. "Consequently there was insufficient evidence available to address the potential environmental exposures to carcinogens that were alleged in the complaint."

The detention center spokesman, Navy Capt. Chris Scholl, said Tuesday that prison camp troops "routinely" stay

temporarily at the tent city and there was no order to stop that, or withdraw military units assigned to work there daily.

An Army unit from the Tennessee National Guard is based inside the hangar, where they produce a weekly newsletter, *The Wire*, for prison camp staff who live and work miles away. That unit also processes visiting reporters' documents and, during the one day a month reporters are permitted at the detention center, decide which photos taken by independent journalists must be destroyed for "operational security reasons."

GOP Looks To Tighten Rules For Gitmo Transfers

By Jordain Carney

[The Hill](#), April 12, 2016

Senate Republicans want to tighten restrictions on President Obama's ability to transfer detainees out of Guantanamo Bay.

Sen. Jerry Moran (R-Kan.) on Tuesday introduced legislation that would require the secretary of Defense to certify that a detainee "no longer poses a continuing threat to the security of the United States, its citizens and its interests" before sending them to another country.

"It is critical to our national security that Congress has a role in the transfer authorization process," Moran said. "The current process is entirely subjective and allows detainees to be transferred and released who may still pose a threat to our national security."

Under the bill, as part of the certification, the secretary must consider — among other things — a detainee's involvement in planning or carrying out terrorists attacks, the host country, the detainee's support for terrorist groups or terrorists, and the likelihood that an individual will engage in another act of terrorism or reconnect with terrorists.

The certifications to Congress must take place within 30 days of the secretary deciding a detainee is no longer a threat.

Moran's legislation is backed by Republican Sens. Steve Daines (Mont.), Thom Tillis (N.C.), Roy Blunt (Mo.), Marco Rubio (Fla.) and James Inhofe (Okla.).

The proposal is the latest from Senate Republicans to try to crack down on Obama's ability to transfer detainees since the administration handed over a plan to close the facility earlier this year.

Sen. Kelly Ayotte (R-N.H.) introduced legislation that would block transfers out of Guantanamo Bay through September 2017 and prohibit permanently closing the facility.

Republicans argue that by pushing to close Guantanamo Bay, Obama is putting a campaign pledge above national security.

Rubio added Tuesday that the continued release or transfer of detainees is "reckless."

Sen. Mark Kirk (R-Ill.) has also introduced legislation to block the administration from transferring detainees to unstable countries or state sponsors of terrorism.

CYBER NEWS

Senators Say IRS Must Better Protect Taxpayer Data

By Meggie Morris

[USA Today](#), April 12, 2016

WASHINGTON — Cybercriminals may be able to steal the personal information taxpayers share with the IRS because the agency has failed to maintain adequate protections, U.S. senators said Tuesday.

"Hackers and crooks, including many working for foreign crime syndicates, are jumping at every opportunity they have to steal hard-earned money and sensitive personal data from U.S. taxpayers," said Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden, the top Democrat on the Finance Committee at a Tuesday hearing reviewing the IRS' operation. "In my view, taxpayers have been failed by the agencies, the companies and the policymakers here in Congress they rely on to protect them."

Wyden and other senators questioned whether the Internal Revenue Service's digital defenses were adequate, citing a breach discovered last May in which the IRS said that more than 700,000 taxpayer accounts were accessed by online attackers between January 2014 and May 2015.

"While we are clearly making real progress in this area, the challenges are continuing to grow and criminals behind this kind of data theft are getting more sophisticated and aggressive, seemingly by the day," said committee chairman Orrin Hatch, R-Utah. "And, American taxpayers and their livelihoods are their targets."

Last month, the IRS suspended a service that allowed taxpayers who already had been victims of identity theft to retrieve specially issued Identity Protection PINs after attackers gained access to PINs associated with more than 100,000 Social Security numbers.

"So after leaving the front door open, the IRS left the back door open as well," said Wyden. "There is no excuse for this."

But IRS Commissioner John Koskinen noted that IRS security systems withstand more than 1 million malicious attempts to access them every day. He also pointed out that the IRS has implemented more than 2,000 security recommendations from the Government Accountability Office, a nonpartisan investigative arm of Congress, in recent years.

Comptroller General Gene Dodaro criticized the inconsistent application of security measures across the IRS, saying it has resulted in numerous weaknesses. The GAO made 94 recommendations between August 2014 and March

2016 that Dodaro hopes will be implemented to secure American taxpayers' information.

The IRS is not alone in ineffectively protecting American taxpayers, senators said.

Consistent problems with private, paid tax preparers also need to be addressed by giving the IRS authority to regulate the preparers, Dodaro added.

Wyden said Congress also needs to authorize the IRS to streamline its hiring process for cybersecurity staff because cybersecurity specialists are in demand while the federal hiring process is slow. Koskinen said the standard federal hiring process takes three to six months.

IRS Head Says Cybersecurity Problems Leave Taxpayers Vulnerable

By Brian Naylor

[NPR](#), April 12, 2016

With taxes on the minds of many Americans this week, a Senate committee looks at how vulnerable taxpayers' information is to cyber theft. The head of the IRS testifies on Capitol Hill.

Ransomware: Extortionist Hackers Borrow Customer-service Tactics

By Jim Finkle

[Reuters](#), April 12, 2016

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California Lawmakers Take Step Toward Outlawing 'Ransomware'

By Dan Whitcomb

[Reuters](#), April 12, 2016

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Security Experts Find 'no Cure' For Ransomware

By Hannah Kuchler

[Financial Times](#), April 12, 2016

Full-text stories from the Financial Times are available to FT subscribers by clicking the link.

Researchers: Newer Type Of Ransomware Is Harbinger Of Danger

By Tami Abdollah

[Associated Press](#), April 11, 2016

WASHINGTON (AP) — An unusual strain of virus-like hacker software that exploits computer server vulnerabilities — without requiring human interaction — is a leading

example of a new generation of "ransomware," according to a new report by Cisco Systems Inc.

Hackers use such software to target large-scale networks and hold data hostage in exchange for bigger payments. Such a strain, known as Samas or samsam, hit the MedStar Health Inc. hospital chain last month.

In such attacks, hackers target backup files and records, encrypting them to make them an unreadable gobbledygook of characters. To regain access, users without additional safe backups who don't want to lose critical files often pay the ransom, typically \$10,000 to \$15,000 for an entire network or hundreds to a thousand or so dollars for a single computer.

The ability to demand payment in bitcoin, a difficult-to-trace virtual currency not controlled by any country, was "basically the birth of ransomware" and has helped drive its success since the currency's introduction in 2009, said Craig Williams, a senior technical leader at Cisco's Talos security research group.

Samas exploits vulnerabilities giving hackers a way into JBoss application servers that are frequently used by some of the largest corporations. Once inside, the hackers sometimes implant a tool that steals credentials, allowing it to spread through the system, and encrypt scores of digital files along the way.

Ransomware has become a new targeted attack, with thousands of variants emerging over the last six months, said Dmitri Alperovitch, co-founder and chief technology officer of CrowdStrike Inc.

Most ransomware still requires a human to click a link or open an infected email attachment, but Cisco's report warned that "the age of self-propagating ransomware, or cryptoworms, is right around the corner." Worms are generally virus-like infections that are programmed to spread automatically, without human interaction.

The semi-autonomous nature of this ransomware means that defenses, such as maintaining updated and patched systems and safe backups, are more predictable than teaching users to safely use the Internet.

Ransomware has become an increasing threat over the last six months, with reported cases on pace to beat last year's numbers.

Last year's 2,453 reports of ransomware hackings to the FBI totaled a reported loss of \$24.1 million, making up nearly one-third of the complaints over the past decade. They also represented 41 percent of the \$57.6 million in reported losses since 2005. Such losses are significantly higher than any paid ransoms because companies routinely include remediation costs, lost productivity, legal fees and sometimes even the price of lost data in their estimates.

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Cyber Threats Are 'Mind Blowing,' Crooks Getting Smarter: Report

By Herb Weisbaum

[NBC News](#), April 12, 2016

The technology you use is being targeted, every hour of every day.

These digital attacks are growing in number and sophistication, according to the Internet Security Threat Report released by the cyber security company Symantec on Tuesday. The data lost, the money stolen and the disruption caused by cybercriminals is worse than ever.

"We see a higher level of professionalization among these attackers, and not just nation states where you expect that sort of thing, but even with the common cybercriminals," said Kevin Haley, director of Symantec Security Response.

Cybercrime is now such a part of everyday life that we're no longer shocked by the staggering numbers being reported. For example, Symantec discovered more than 430 million new and unique pieces of malware in 2015, up 36 percent from the year before.

"That's really a mind-blowing number," Haley told NBC News. "In 2009, we had about two million pieces of malware and at the time we thought that was pretty overwhelming, and now we're talking about more than 430 million. It's more than a million new pieces of malware getting written each and every day." Zero-day vulnerabilities a growing threat

Criminals are getting better at finding and using so-called "zero-day" vulnerabilities — previously unknown flaws in browsers and website plugins that leave home and business computers open to attack. Hundreds of thousands of systems can be infected before the vulnerability is discovered and patched.

The number of zero-day vulnerabilities discovered last year more than doubled to 54, up 125 percent.

Professional crime rings try to find and exploit the vulnerabilities in popular software, such as Internet Explorer and Adobe Flash, because so many people use these programs every day. Symantec found that four of the five most exploited zero-day vulnerabilities last year were with Adobe Flash.

Read More: Why the FBI Might Not Have to Share Their Secret iPhone Method

In a statement to NBC News, Adobe said it takes the security of its products and customers very seriously. The majority of these attacks exploit software that has not been updated with the latest security patches, the company said in its email.

"Flash Player is one of the most ubiquitous and widely distributed pieces of software in the world, and as such, is a target of malicious hackers. We are continuously working to improve Flash Player security as the threat landscape evolves, and when issues arise, we work to quickly resolve

them. With regards to zero-days, we've been able to expedite the patching process to just days," Adobe wrote.

This is why it's important to have your computer set to automatically receive and install updates. Until those patches are in place, your system is vulnerable. Even well-known sites can be dangerous

It's easy to assume that you're safe from online crime if you stick to well-known websites. But that's not the case. You don't have to go to some "bad part" of the web to get infected.

Cybercrooks are taking advantage of flaws in legitimate websites to spread their malicious software.

"They can get in to that site and plant their malware," Haley explained. "So when you show up at a site you trust, they're able to load their malware onto your machine and you won't even know it happened to you."

The report points the finger at website administrators who fail to secure their sites. Symantec estimates that more than 75 percent of all legitimate websites have unpatched vulnerabilities. Fifteen percent have what the report called "critical" flaws that allow cybercriminals to gain access and manipulate the site with very little effort. Ransomware attacks increase and expand to new targets

Criminals go where the money is and they're making a bundle from ransomware that extorts payment from their victims.

Ransomware is a form a malware that encrypts all the data on a computer or network system. In order to get the key to unlock those files, you need to pay a ransom — typically \$300 to \$500 per machine. Payment is usually done in Bitcoins, the digital currency that's virtually impossible for law enforcement to trace.

If the crooks can compromise a business, one that hasn't been good about backing up its files, the payday can be tens of thousands of dollars. That's why businesses are now prime targets.

This encryption-style ransomware grew 35 percent in 2015, Symantec reported. And the crooks moved beyond PCs to encrypt smartphones, Mac and Linux systems. Because this crime is so lucrative, ransomware attacks are expected to grow dramatically this year. Computer systems big and small at risk

Criminal hackers don't give up when their attack is unsuccessful. Symantec's analysis of the data shows that if criminals really want to get into a computer system at a government organization or financial company, they'll try at least three more times during the year.

"These guys don't give up easily," Haley said. "You may feel good if you repelled one attack, but don't spend too much time feeling satisfied with yourself, because there's probably three more coming."

Big computer systems make an appealing target, but the report warns that all businesses are potentially vulnerable. In fact, businesses with less than 250 employees

are more at risk than ever. Last year, 43 percent of all cyberattacks targeted these small companies. Many companies avoid full disclosure

Personal records are being compromised at an alarming rate. There are now so many breaches, most never make the news.

Nine mega-breaches (more than 10 million records stolen) were reported last year.

The total number of identities exposed from all intrusions jumped 23 percent to 429 million. But Symantec believes the true number is much higher — more than a half billion.

Read More: Smart TVs an 'Inevitable' Path for Hackers to Attack Home PCs: Experts

Symantec found that "more and more companies chose not to reveal the full extent of the breaches they experienced." The report calls this "a disturbing trend" that jeopardizes everyone.

"You can understand it would be embarrassing to a company that somebody broke in and took off with all the records of their customers, so there's a tendency to try to make it sound better than it was or hide how bad it was," Haley said. "And that's really a shame because transparency allows all of us to understand the problem so we can defend ourselves better." Mobile devices are vulnerable, too

Whether you realize it or not, your smartphone is vulnerable to all the malicious things a criminal can do to your desktop or laptop. Malware inserted into apps or downloaded directly can steal your contacts, passwords and PIN codes. Ransomware that locks a smartphone has already been deployed.

Up until now, threats to iPhones and iPads have been infrequent and limited. This changed in 2015, the report noted, with new threats to Apple's operating system and thousands of infected iOS apps.

Symantec predicts that mobile threats will continue to proliferate in 2016, and that security researchers, operating system developers and app writers are already taking note and paying more attention to mobile security.

"Although we expect mobile devices to come under growing attack over the next year, there is also hope that with the right preventative measures and continuing investment in security, users can achieve a high level of protection," the report concluded.

Despite this gloomy reality check, there are things you can and should do to protect yourself whenever or however you go online. The National Cyber Security Alliance has an extensive library of resources at its StaySafeOnline.org website.

Herb Weisbaum is The ConsumerMan.

FBI Director Comey Calls 'Emotion' Surrounding Apple Case Unproductive, Says Encryption Needs Legislative Resolution

By Mikey Campbell

[AppleInsider](#), April 12, 2016

Two weeks after the Federal Bureau of Investigation withdrew its legal action against Apple, agency director James Comey on Tuesday said the difficulty of squaring national security policies with consumer privacy rights was the most onerous of his government career.

In February, a federal judge ordered

Apple to comply with FBI requests for assistance in accessing an iPhone linked to last year's San Bernardino shootings. The company resisted, saying that doing so would leave millions of similar devices vulnerable to attack, a stance that sparked debate over government rights to digital data access.

Speaking today at Catholic University's Columbus School of Law, Comey opened up about the FBI's brief — but intense — court battle with the world's largest tech company, reports USA Today.

"I'm glad the litigation is gone," Comey said, adding that the "emotion around that issue was not productive." He later said, "Apple is not a demon; I hope people don't perceive the FBI as a demon."

In its case against Apple, the FBI sought access to an iPhone 5c used by San Bernardino terror suspect Syed Rizwan Farook under the All Writs Act, a judicial instrument that grants judges the power to issue orders when all other tools are exhausted. The target device was protected by iOS encryption protocols, meaning Apple would have been forced to invent a software bypass, or exploit, to comply with government requests.

As can be expected, Apple mounted a comprehensive — and very public — rebuttal to the strong-arm tactics, arguing the AWA order amounted to government overreach that violated the company's First Amendment rights

. DOJ officials and federal prosecutors, perhaps unwisely, engaged Apple in what amounted to a PR campaign for public mindshare.

One day before federal prosecutors were set to face off against Apple lawyers in an initial evidentiary hearing, the FBI revealed that an outside party had discovered a way into Farook's iPhone, rendering the AWA motion moot.

The FBI is not willing to share the exploit with Apple, but says the technique only works on iPhone 5c hardware and older. For its part, Apple said it will not sue for the information.

While similar U.S. court actions are pending, including a recently failed bid to leverage AWA in Boston, Comey said the DOJ's decision to withdraw in San Bernardino allowed both the FBI and Apple to "take the temperature down."

Moving forward, Comey said the encryption issues brought into play as a result of the court action cannot be resolved by the court system, suggesting a legislative course of action is needed. Comey is now in apparent agreement with Apple CEO Tim Cook, who in February said the complex issue needs to be debated in Congress.

FBI's James Comey: Conversation Needed On Encryption's Impacts To National Security, Law Enforcement

By Jane Edwards

[ExecutiveGov](#), April 12, 2016

FBI Director James Comey has called on the U.S. government and the public to work together and identify ways to discuss issues of security and privacy related to encryption.

Comey noted in a speech delivered Wednesday at the Center for the Study of American Democracy Biennial Conference at Kenyon College in Ohio that it is challenging to establish conversations about the impact of encryption on national security and law enforcement.

"Ubiquitous strong encryption is bringing significant change to the way we think about liberty and security," Comey said.

"We should try to have a thoughtful conversation about what we do about it as a people."

He also discussed how the litigation between the U.S. government and Apple over the iPhone 5C of a terrorist involved in the December terrorist attack in San Bernardino, California incited several individuals to look for ways to get encryption data from the phone.

Comey also cited his views on the issue of privacy at the conference.

"You may still end up disagreeing with the government, but starting from the position that privacy should be absolute is just not a fair-minded place to be in my estimation," he said.

"It's also not the case I believe that any infringement on privacy is to be feared," Comey added.

FBI Director Likens Apple Encryption Clash To Gun-Control Debate

By Jacob Gershman

[Wall Street Journal](#), April 12, 2016

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

FBI Chief James Comey 'Glad' Dispute With Apple Over Terrorist's Phone Has Ended

[ABC News](#), April 12, 2016

FBI Director James Comey said today he's "glad" the legal fight with Apple involving an iPhone left behind by one of the San Bernardino shooters is over.

The dispute – which came to an abrupt end last month after the FBI said it found a way to break into the phone without Apple's help – was "creating an emotion around the issue that was not productive," Comey told law students at Catholic University in Washington, D.C.

Nevertheless, Comey said the nation must still discuss and grapple with how to balance privacy and security interests as new technologies are developed.

Citing two pending cases in New York and Boston, Comey said "there will be plenty" more cases like the San Bernardino legal dispute, noting that encryption on personal devices is now the default and "by definition it's going to affect the work of law enforcement."

Comey: FBI, Apple Court Clash Created Unproductive 'Emotion'

[Associated Press](#), April 12, 2016

WASHINGTON — FBI Director James Comey said Tuesday he was glad a court fight in California over access to a locked iPhone had ended because it "was creating an emotion around the issue that was not productive," likening the rhetoric and passion surrounding the discussion to the debate over gun control.

Comey told an audience of Catholic University law school students that the FBI was correct to ask a judge to force Apple Inc. to help it hack into the phone used by a gunman in the December mass killing in San Bernardino, California.

"That litigation," he said, "had to be brought, in my view, because that case had to be investigated in a reasonable way. That's what that litigation was about."

But generally speaking, Comey said, lawsuits and court fights won't resolve the broader collision between privacy and national security. He said he regretted that the San Bernardino case in particular had "created an emotion around the issue that was not productive" and was glad that that case had ended.

"We can't resolve these really important issues that affect our values — technology, innovation, safety and all kinds of other things — in litigation," he said.

The Justice Department last month told a magistrate judge that it had managed to access the phone of Syed Farook without Apple's help — though it didn't say how — effectively ending the case. The FBI is examining the device, but officials have not revealed whether any useful information has been recovered, and they have not said whether they will share with Apple the method they used to break into the phone.

Comey said one "unintended benefit" of the Apple case has been greater public dialogue and engagement about the balance between privacy and security. But he said he hoped "some of the emotion would come down" and that the

dialogue was not well-served by “being tweeted about” or being spoken of in absolutes.

“Some of the emotion that I’ve received around this issue reminds me sometimes — (in) the absolutist and slippery slope arguments — remind me of some of the rhetoric we hear in the gun debate. It’s the same kind of rhetoric and passion in this conversation,” he said.

Comey said the conversation would certainly persist given that there are “plenty” of cases affected by encryption. The Justice Department last week said that it would continue trying to force Apple to reveal an iPhone’s data in a New York City drug case.

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Comey: FBI, Apple Court Clash Created Unproductive ‘Emotion’

By Eric Tucker

[Associated Press](#), April 12, 2016

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FBI Paid Professional Hackers One-time Fee To Crack San Bernardino iPhone

By Ellen Nakashima

[Washington Post](#), April 12, 2016

The FBI cracked a San Bernardino terrorist’s phone with the help of professional hackers who discovered and brought to the bureau at least one previously unknown software flaw, according to people familiar with the matter.

The new information was then used to create a piece of hardware that helped the FBI to crack the iPhone’s four-digit personal identification number without triggering a security feature that would have erased all the data, the individuals said.

The researchers, who typically keep a low profile, specialize in hunting for vulnerabilities in software and then in some cases selling them to the U.S. government. They were paid a one-time flat fee for the solution.

Cracking the four-digit PIN, which the FBI had estimated would take 26 minutes, was not the hard part for the bureau. The challenge from the beginning was disabling a feature on the phone that wipes data stored on the device after 10 incorrect tries at guessing the PIN code. A second feature also steadily increases the time allowed between attempts.

The bureau in this case did not need the services of the Israeli firm Cellebrite, as some earlier reports had suggested, people familiar with the matter said.

The U.S. government now has to weigh whether to disclose the flaws to Apple, a decision that probably will be made by a White House-led group.

The people who helped the U.S. government come from the sometimes shadowy world of hackers and security

researchers who profit from finding flaws in companies' software or systems.

Some hackers, known as "white hats," disclose the vulnerabilities to the firms responsible for the software or to the public so they can be fixed and are generally regarded as ethical. Others, called "black hats," use the information to hack networks and steal people's personal information.

The individuals who helped the FBI in the San Bernardino case fall into a third category, often considered ethically murky: researchers who sell flaws to governments, companies that make surveillance tools or groups on the black market.

This last group, dubbed "gray hats," can be controversial since critics say they might be helping governments spy on their own citizens. When selling exploits to governments or on the black market, researchers do not disclose the flaws to the companies responsible for the software, as the exploits' value depends on the software remaining vulnerable.

In the case of the San Bernardino iPhone, the solution found by the hackers has limited shelf life.

FBI Director James B. Comey has said that the solution works only on iPhone 5Cs running the iOS 9 operating system — what he calls a "narrow slice" of phones.

Apple said last week that it would not sue the government to gain access to the San Bernardino solution.

Still, many security and privacy experts have been calling on the government to disclose the vulnerability data to Apple so that the firm can patch it.

If the government shares data on the flaws with Apple, "they're going to fix it and then we're back where we started from," Comey said in a discussion at a privacy conference last week. Nonetheless, he said Monday in Miami, "we're considering whether to make that disclosure or not."

The White House has established a process in which federal officials weigh whether to disclose any security vulnerabilities they find. It could be weeks before the FBI's case is reviewed, officials said.

"When we discover these vulnerabilities, there's a very strong bias towards disclosure," White House cybersecurity coordinator Michael Daniel said in an interview in October 2014, speaking generally and not about the Apple case. "That's for a good reason. If you had to pick the economy and the government that is most dependent on a digital infrastructure, that would be the United States."

But, he added, "we do have an intelligence and national security mission that we have to carry out. That is a factor that we weigh in making our decisions."

The decision-makers, which include senior officials from the Justice Department, FBI, National Security Agency, CIA, State Department and Department of Homeland Security, consider how widely used the software in question is. They also look at the utility of the flaw that has been discovered.

Can it be used to track members of a terrorist group, to prevent a cyberattack, to identify a nuclear weapons proliferator? Is there another way to obtain the information?

In the case of the phone used by the San Bernardino terrorist, "you could make the justification on both national security and on law enforcement grounds because of the potential use by terrorists and other national security concerns," said a senior administration official, speaking on the condition of anonymity because of the matter's sensitivity.

A decision also can be made to disclose the flaw — just not right away. An agency might say it needs the vulnerability for only a few months or that its utility will quickly diminish.

"A decision to withhold a vulnerability is not a forever decision," Daniel said in the earlier interview. "We require periodic reviews. So if the conditions change, if what was originally a true [undiscovered flaw] suddenly becomes identified, we can make the decision to disclose it at that point."

Japanese Pinball Maker Tied To iPhone Hack Set For Terror Fight

By Monami Yui

[Bloomberg News](#), April 12, 2016

Cellebrite Mobile Synchronization Ltd., the forensics unit of a little-known Japanese pinball company, is fast becoming the go-to guys when law enforcement needs to unlock smartphones. Its group chief executive officer has plans to keep the firm on the frontlines against terrorism.

In his first interview since Sun Corp. was thrust into the spotlight in the legal tussle between Apple Inc. and U.S. law enforcement over the hacking of an iPhone, Chief Executive Officer Masanori Yamaguchi says his company wants to expand its work countering tech-savvy terrorists. Yamaguchi says he's willing to spend as much as 20 billion yen (\$185 million) to acquire or merge with companies to expand its sought-after data extraction business.

"Demand will never go away," Yamaguchi, 67, said from the company's headquarters in Aichi prefecture southwest of Tokyo. "Extracting mobile phone data is the fastest way to solve crimes nowadays."

Petah Tikva, Israel-based Cellebrite is said to have worked with the Federal Bureau of Investigation to crack an iPhone connected with the San Bernardino, California terrorist attack in December and the company also helped authorities access devices used by assailants in the Paris shootings last year, according to people familiar with the matter.

Aside from the FBI, Cellebrite now has a client list that includes some of the world's most secretive spy organizations, such as the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency and Interpol, according to the people, who asked to not be identified because the information is private. Interpol signed

an agreement with Cellebrite Tuesday in which the company will provide a unit of the international police organization with digital forensic equipment and training services over a three-year period.

Sun is intent on growing its business, said Yamaguchi. Demand for the mobile forensics services of Cellebrite will grow as much as 20 percent annually in revenue, he said.

"There are very few companies like us, and I think this is our strength," Yamaguchi said. "As for the next step, we're open to the idea of teaming up with companies that possess unique technology in forensics. We will continue to search for an appropriate partner."

The sensitivity of the technology, and the edge it provides to law enforcement, means companies and government agencies are reluctant to discuss methods of data extraction. Sun declined to release names of cases or clients, while the FBI, which said a third party had demonstrated a way to get into the iPhone connected to the San Bernardino shootings, has also not disclosed its partner. The CIA and the office of the Paris prosecutor in charge of the investigation into last year's attacks there declined to comment. Interpol said it couldn't confirm whether Cellebrite aided in hacking phones used in the Paris shootings as law enforcement in that city handled the investigation.

Sun's stock has eased after surging from March 21, the day the FBI said a third party had demonstrated a way to get into the iPhone. Shares fell 2.3 percent to 899 yen in Tokyo trading on Tuesday to close 22 percent higher since the FBI's announcement.

The company, which employed 40 workers when Sun acquired it in 2007, has grown to become a 500-person firm with nine offices on four continents focusing on work to extract data, decode and analyze Apple devices, including iPods, iPads, and iPhones. Its technology can also be performed on locked Apple devices with simple or complex passcodes, and can also be used to recover deleted data, according to the company's website.

Sun is looking for targets with expertise in unlocking data on personal computers, Yamaguchi said. The company could issue and sell up to 2 million new shares, about 10 percent of existing shares, to raise funds within two years, he said. The proceeds, about 1.8 billion yen at Tuesday's share price, would be used to build the company's forensics business as well as augmented reality and machine-to-machine communications, he said.

"We've had unexpected feedback," he said. "Although we appreciate attention being paid to our company, we must focus on our business and make every effort to improve our services."

Sun has been building components for pinball-like game machines found in Japan's pachinko parlors since the 1970s, and moved on to developing personal computers, video games and more recently, iPhone mahjong apps. In

2007, as sales slumped, Sun acquired Cellebrite for a reported \$17.5 million. It hadn't ventured into forensics at the time, and later expanded its customer base beyond mobile phone retailers to police and law enforcement authorities throughout the world, said Yamaguchi.

Revenue from Sun's mobile data solutions division overtook pachinko parts in the fiscal year ended March 2014 and contributed 13.6 billion yen or 50 percent of sales in the last fiscal year, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. The bulk of Sun's mobile data solutions business comes from Cellebrite, company spokesman Hidefumi Sugaya said March 31.

Cellebrite's website is full of kudos from police forces around the globe crediting its technology for facilitating investigations. On the Cellebrite website, the Providence, Rhode Island police department, for example, says the company helped it solve the 2014 gang-related murder of a 12-year-old girl and three other women at a graduation party.

Transparency Market Research, a global market intelligence company, forecast in March that increasing terrorist attacks and crime will push the digital forensics market to 13 percent annual growth to \$4.97 billion by 2021.

Cellebrite has emerged as a leading player in the security privacy industry, said Richard Overill, a senior lecturer in computer science at King's College in London who has studied the sector since 1992. Yamaguchi says the company commands a 55 percent market share of the U.S. forensics market.

"The general opinion is that Cellebrite's digital forensics products for mobile devices are leading edge state-of-the-art," said Overill. "They have put more effort, experience and expertise into studying the potentially exploitable vulnerabilities in these systems than other companies, and as a result have been able to produce superior products."

Sales in Sun's mobile data solution business is expected to expand 10 percent to 20 percent annually in the coming years, as demand for Cellebrite's devices and services are likely to increase, especially in China and India, Yamaguchi said.

"We've been cutting weight of pachinko-related business while becoming increasingly reliant on Cellebrite," said Yamaguchi. "We want to keep improving our

technology to provide better services and skills to make the world

safe and peaceful."

California Phone Decryption Bill Defeated

By Jeremy B. White

[Sacramento \(CA\) Bee](#), April 12, 2016

A national debate over smartphone encryption arrived in Sacramento on Tuesday as legislators defeated a bill penalizing companies that don't work with courts to break into

phones, siding with technology industry representatives who called the bill a dangerous affront to privacy.

The bill did not receive a vote, with members of the Assembly Committee on Privacy and Consumer Protection worrying the measure would undermine data security and impose a logistically untenable requirement on California companies.

Disagreement over the balance between privacy and public safety exploded into public view in recent months when the FBI demanded that Apple unlock the phone of San Bernardino massacre perpetrator Syed Farook. Apple refused to comply and ultimately the FBI devised its own way in.

Assembly Bill 1681 would authorize \$2,500 penalties against phone manufacturers and operating system providers if they do not obey court orders to decrypt phones. Assemblyman Jim Cooper, D-Elk Grove, a former sheriff's deputy who led an Internet crimes task force, called it "mind-boggling" that search warrants allow access to peoples' houses but not necessarily to their phones.

"I'm not concerned about terrorism. The federal investigators deal with that," Cooper said, but "local law enforcement deals with cases every day and they cannot access this information."

Cellphones protected by full-disk encryption offer criminals a digital fortress in which to hide and operate freely, Cooper and his law enforcement backers argued. They said the technology has been a particular boon to human traffickers and child pornographers. Cooper relayed a story of a trafficked teenager who was given phones by the men controlling her and then declined to cooperate with law enforcement.

"She'd been brainwashed so badly she refused to give access to the smartphones," Cooper said, but because of encryption, "a search warrant proved useless."

Apple, Google and organizations representing the tech and wireless industries took the opposite view, arguing the bill would both erode personal privacy and imperil security by exposing information to hackers and other criminals. Other opponents included the California Chamber of Commerce and the California Bankers Association.

"Fundamentally weakening the security of smartphones in the way AB 1681 envisions not only doesn't make us safer, it actually makes us less safe," warned Internet Association lobbyist Robert Callahan, who called encryption "an incredibly important tool in today's interconnected, Internet-enabled world to keep data secure."

Politicians Still Don't Get The, Uh ... Internets

[WXYZ-TV Detroit](#), April 12, 2016

"The, uh, internets," George W. Bush said.

"It's a series of tubes," said Sen. Ted Stevens.

Politicians have never had the best grasp of technology. Today, that's most obvious when they and other government officials talk about the current big issue: encryption.

"I don't want them using our internet."

It's everybody's internet.

"We should be able to penetrate the internet and find out exactly where ISIS is and everything about ISIS," Donald Trump said.

That's what the NSA is trying to do. Foreign intelligence collection is literally in the mission statement.

"Technology has become the tool of choice for some very dangerous people."

And the tool of choice for just about everybody else, too.

"Unfortunately, the law has not kept pace with technology."

That's true. In its case with Apple, the FBI relied on the All Writs Act — which hasn't changed since 1789.

"And this disconnect has created a significant public safety problem we have long described as Going Dark," said FBI Director James Comey.

Security experts say that's not true. There are a few dark spots on the internet, but in general, law enforcement has more ways than ever to track criminal behavior online.

"The Achilles heel in the internet is encryption."

If anything, it's the other way around. Rights groups argue encryption is the opposite of a weakness.

"It's a black web. Even in commercial products. PlayStation, John, which our kids use. If the two ends communicate, that's encrypted," said Sen. Dianne Feinstein.

It sounds like she's describing end-to-end encryption. But Sony says it discloses information to law enforcement when so legally compelled — which it wouldn't be able to do if its services were secured end-to-end so only the users could see their communications.

"John, if we changed and we weren't talking about terrorism, we were talking about pedophilia, and the FBI's trying to make a law enforcement case ... Would we want, with a legitimate court order, to be able to make that case based upon what they were transferring in encrypted networks? The answer's yes," said Sen. Richard Burr.

This is the impasse. Encryption can defeat valid, legal investigations, but security experts agree: Backdoors will make valid, legal encryption less secure.

"If, in fact, you can't crack that at all — government can't get in — then everybody's walking around with a Swiss bank account in their pocket," said President Obama.

Yes, but if you give up the keys to that account, there's no telling who else might get hold of them.

"I don't know enough about the technology, Martha, to be able to say what it is," said Hillary Clinton.

And that's the problem.

Lifeline Bill Among Seven Being Weighed In House

By Mario Trujillo, The Hill
[The Hill](#), April 12, 2016

The House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Communications and Technology will consider a bill Wednesday that would cap yearly expenditures under the Lifeline program at \$1.5 billion. The legislation comes in response to the FCC's decision to expand the subsidy program to broadband with a yearly cap of \$2.25 billion, which critics say could easily be exceeded. Other bills being considered include several related to public safety. One bill would increase penalties for swatting, or calling 911 to draw a law enforcement response to the home of an unsuspecting victim.

WHITE HOUSE VETO THREAT ON RATE REG BILL: The White House on Tuesday issued a veto threat against a bill hitting the House floor Friday that would block the Federal Communications Commission from regulating the rates of Internet service. Democrats have said the FCC has no interest in regulating the monthly rates that Internet service providers charge for service. But the Office of Management and Budget said the "overly broad" bill would undermine the FCC's net neutrality rules.

LETTER OPPOSING RATE REG BAN: A group of 50 organizations sent a letter to House leaders urging them to vote against the FCC rate regulation ban ahead of Friday's vote. The letter said the broadly written bill "would hamstring the FCC's ability to carry out its congressionally-mandated responsibilities."

THUNE EYES REAUTH MARKUP: Senate Commerce Committee Chairman John Thune (R-S.D.) said he expects to mark up his Federal Communications Commission reauthorization bill in late April. "It will probably be the week before the break," he said.

AND KEEPS ROSENWORCEL NOMINATION ON HIS RADAR: He also said that he had discussed with Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) the holds on the nomination of Democratic FCC Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel, reportedly placed by Sens. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) and Mike Lee (R-Utah). "I've told Sen. Reid that we've got a couple on our side," he said. "I think he's talked to Mike Lee but I don't know that he's had a conversation yet with Sen. Cruz, so I think that that may be the next thing to happen."

MERGER SKEPTICS MEET WITH FCC LAWYERS: The Stop Mega Cable Coalition met with a series of FCC lawyers and advisors to FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler late last week and early this week to express their concerns with the proposed merger between Time Warner Cable and Charter Communications. "Members explained that if the Commission decides to approve the merger, it must impose workable remedies for all of the harms presented by this

transaction, including the threats posed by the anti-competitive methods discussed herein," the group wrote in a filing.

ON TAP:

At 10:15 a.m., the Energy and Commerce subcommittee on Communications and Technology will hold a hearing on seven bills.

At 10:30 a.m., the House Judiciary Committee will mark up the Email Privacy Act.

At 12:30 p.m., the Media Institute will hold its annual Communications Forum.

At 2 p.m., Rep. Jackie Speier (D-Calif.) will introduce a bill to require phone companies to offer robocall blocking technology to their customers.

At 2:50 p.m., President Obama will give remarks at the White House Science Fair.

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT:

Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg criticized the "fearful voices calling for building walls" during his opening remarks at the company's developer conference Tuesday in San Francisco, taking a shot at Donald Trump.

Privacy and civil liberties groups on Tuesday begrudgingly announced they were OK with changes to an email privacy bill heading for a House Judiciary Committee vote.

Uber received more than 400 requests for data from law enforcement in the second half of 2015, according to a new report.

One of Capitol Hill's most prominent cybersecurity voices is supporting a new bill that would earmark billions of dollars to modernize the government's technology infrastructure.

Supporters of email privacy legislation will not rely solely on stand-alone legislation to get their measure passed by year's end.

U.S. Military Says Using Cyber Capabilities Against Islamic State

By Andrea Shalal
[Reuters](#), April 12, 2016

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Hire Faster, From Every Discipline

By Zach Noble
[Federal Computer Week](#), April 12, 2016

Federal CIO Tony Scott said, "Cyber is a global problem, and we need people who speak every language on the planet."

The government needs to hire skilled cybersecurity professionals fast, starting with the federal chief information security officer, according to Federal CIO Tony Scott.

Speaking at an April 12 event sponsored by the Christian Science Monitor's Passcode security blog, Scott said the White House was down to a handful of candidates and would likely announce the new federal CISO within 30 days.

"It's about time we had one," he said, adding that he's excited to have a CISO join him.

But the federal government needs technology talent across agencies, not just at the highest levels, he added.

"There's no area combined with cybersecurity that I would say we're full up on," Scott said, adding that agencies need to broaden their reach. They should consider hiring people from a variety of disciplines – such as cultural anthropology, economics, biology and foreign languages – who also have cybersecurity knowledge.

"Cyber is a global problem, and we need people who speak every language on the planet," he said.

The government also shouldn't limit its applicant pool to college graduates.

Scott said requirements that job applicants have four-year degrees might not always be appropriate, and his office is working with the Office of Personnel Management to develop new approaches, including offering cybersecurity scholarships, hiring veterans and nontraditional applicants, and speeding up the famously sluggish federal hiring process.

"It's not competitive," said Rodney Petersen, head of the National Institute of Standards and Technology's National Initiative for Cybersecurity Education, of the hiring process.

The IRS has claimed that the long hiring cycle hurt its recruitment efforts even more than low pay, and Scott agreed.

He recalled working at Microsoft when company executives started offering flashier perks because they were losing good job applicants to other tech companies. When he dug into the problem, Scott found that applicants weren't eschewing Microsoft because it lacked flash; they said, "The other guys got me a job offer quicker."

Once Microsoft streamlined its hiring process, it regained a competitive edge, and Scott said that is what the government needs to do.

His comments came two months after the passage of a law that seeks to streamline federal hiring. Scott said his work with OPM will address that issue, and changes will be announced in the coming months.

About the Author

Zach Noble is a staff writer covering digital citizen services, workforce issues and a range of civilian federal agencies.

Before joining FCW in 2015, Noble served as assistant editor at the viral news site TheBlaze, where he wrote a mix of business, political and breaking news stories and managed weekend news coverage. He has also written for online and

print publications including The Washington Free Beacon, The Santa Barbara News-Press, The Federalist and Washington Technology.

Noble is a graduate of Saint Vincent College, where he studied English, economics and mathematics.

Stores Invest Millions To Combat Cyber Crime

By Nicholas Megaw, Murad Ahmed And Mark Vandavelde

[Financial Times](#), April 12, 2016

Full-text stories from the Financial Times are available to FT subscribers by clicking the link.

In Europe, A Great Need For Cybersecurity, But Also Great Opportunity

By Phillip J. Bond, Contributor, And Gerard Mcnamara

[The Hill](#), April 12, 2016

Securing cyberspace is now a critical issue globally, for governments, businesses, citizens and consumers. The European Union is ramping up efforts to improve cybersecurity because it is fundamental to the safety and resilience of the economy and society.

Governments, companies and individuals could be at risk of a potential cyberattack. Critical national infrastructure (utilities, transport, health, etc.) could be at risk. And a country's approach to cybersecurity — or the entire EU's approach, for that matter — also impacts its ability to win foreign investment.

It all adds up to a significant market opportunity. In fact, the cybersecurity market across Europe is expected to grow to over \$35 billion by 2019.

Europe is playing catch-up

The U.S. has been a global leader in developing a comprehensive cybersecurity strategy and has revised it over the years. Individual European countries, such as the United Kingdom and Germany, have certainly undertaken serious work in bulking up cybersecurity. But Europe as a whole is playing catch-up.

The EU seems determined to do more to increase the digitalization of the European-wide economy. Last year, the European Commission, the EU's executive arm, unveiled its ambitious Digital Single Market strategy, seeing 28 national digital markets merging into one market. A digital single market would serve over 500 million people and contribute \$470 billion to the European economy.

A resolute response

But any European digital strategy will fail if the underlying infrastructure cannot be protected. It is vital that the right conditions exist to allow digital networks and services to flourish across the continent. And there's lots of room for growth.

Currently, 54 percent of online services in the European digital marketplace are U.S.-based. Only 15 percent of

European consumers shop online from another EU country and only 7 percent of small- and medium-sized businesses sell cross-border. Most EU policymakers cite low levels of trust in the digital marketplace as the challenge. And that lack of trust is only compounded by news stories of high-profile cyberattacks targeting well-known brands, politicians and celebrities.

Europe's response has mirrored that of the U.S. Recently, the EU reached an agreement on the Network and Information Security Directive and a new 21st-century data protection package. Individual countries are ratifying the Budapest Convention on cyber crime as well as developing their own cybersecurity strategies. This year, the European Commission (like the Obama administration) has prioritized cybersecurity. It will shortly present a proposal establishing a public-private partnership on cybersecurity in the area of technologies and solutions for online network security.

A partnership approach with industry

An effective partnership between government and industry would boost competitiveness and stimulate greater innovation within the cybersecurity and digital privacy sectors in Europe. Funding will come from Horizon 2020, the EU's research-and-development grant program, and will seek to leverage funding from industry, including from U.S. companies. This initiative will also coordinate investment with and between EU member states. This allows greater potential to develop cross-border innovation for European cybersecurity products and services.

U.S. companies are well-placed to win cybersecurity business

The main players in the European cybersecurity market are U.S.-owned companies, with the exception of T-Systems, Atos, Thales and Airbus. There is also a growing presence of niche European companies, many of which have benefited from Horizon 2020 and developed cutting-edge technologies. These may be competitors in certain markets, but they can also be a valuable pool for sourcing new partners, identifying acquisitions or simply adding a new product or solution to a company's offering.

The public consultation on the EU's cybersecurity funding opportunity closed on March 11. An announcement from the European Commission is expected in the coming months with requests for proposals to follow quickly afterwards.

Widespread vulnerabilities can offer widespread opportunities to win business, and U.S. companies watching these developments in the EU stand to benefit.

McNamara is founder and CEO of Brussels-based Schuman Associates, a public affairs consultancy. Bond is a former U.S. undersecretary of Commerce for technology and is founder of the consulting firm Bond & Associates.

House Dem Stumps For Obama's Tech Modernization Push

By Cory Bennett

[The Hill](#), April 12, 2016

One of Capitol Hill's most prominent cybersecurity voices is supporting a new bill that would earmark billions of dollars to modernize the government's technology infrastructure.

"If we do not invest in our technology and cybersecurity now, we will have no one to blame for the next data breach but ourselves," Rep. Ted Lieu (D-Calif.), a first-term member who has become a regular voice on government digital security efforts, said Tuesday in a statement.

The bill was unveiled on Monday by Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-Md.), the second-ranking House Democrat. The legislation would earmark \$3.1 billion to establish an Information Technology Modernization Fund (ITMF), which would overhaul what are widely seen as antiquated government networks.

The fund is meant to help federal agencies better defend themselves from the foreign hackers who have pillaged personal information from numerous agencies in recent years. Most notably, over 20 million federal workers had their data exposed in a digital raid of the Office of Personnel Management last summer.

"The self-sustaining investment fund is an innovative way to rapidly upgrade our outdated and vulnerable IT systems while supporting our federal technology infrastructure for the future," said Lieu, who holds a bachelor's degree in computer science from Stanford University.

The idea was initially included in President Obama's latest budget proposal as part of a sweeping plan to bolster the government's cyber defenses. In addition to the ITMF concept, the White House established a new senior federal cyber official and created a presidential commission on cyber to establish a long-term road map.

Lieu was the first lawmaker to take the ITMF proposal to Capitol Hill. He tried to attach it to the GOP's 2017 budget bill but was shot down by Republicans, who rejected all 29 amendments offered by the Democrats.

Both Lieu and Hoyer are hoping the GOP opposition during budget negotiations was a political move, not an indication of actual opposition to the idea itself.

They believe the proposal might gain bipartisan support as a stand-alone measure.

"A 21st Century government depends on technology to serve the people, and this legislation will go a long way in making sure that our IT systems are both modern and secure throughout the government," Lieu said.

"I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will join us in this effort."

Feds Ask Auto Industry To Help Combat Cyberattacks

By Charles E. Ramirez

[Detroit News](#), April 12, 2016

The U.S. Department of Justice's top national security attorney Tuesday called on the private sector to work with the federal government and law enforcement agencies to fight cyber attacks.

"Sharing information and intelligence between law enforcement is not enough," said John Carlin, assistant U.S. attorney general for national security. "With the ingenuity and development taking place in your hands ... the infrastructure of the internet in your hands, to combat threats against it, we're going to have to work together."

"That means ... telling you what we see in terms of threats and calling on your ingenuity to figure out ways to protect" against them.

Carlin made the remarks during a speech before the Society of Automotive Engineers' 2016 World Congress at the Cobo Convention Center. More than 11,000 engineers, auto industry executives, consultants, academics, government and military officials are expected to attend the event, which began Tuesday and runs through Thursday.

"What brings me here is this is an industry that's on the cusp of not just an evolution but a revolution in how are cars operate, how they talk to each other," he said.

Carlin said experts estimate more than 220 million vehicles will be able to connect to the internet by the year 2020.

The technology has the potential to save lives, but warned terrorists will exploit its weaknesses and use it to do harm, he added.

"Within each of those cars will be hundreds of different systems, each essentially computers in the car, and connected wirelessly," he said. "What we can see based on the threats we've seen in other industries and other areas is those who oppose our values — be they rogue nation states or terrorist groups — are looking to exploit this change in technology."

As head of the attorney general's national security division, Carlin oversees a staff of nearly 400 that handles international and domestic terrorism cases, espionage, cybercrime and other security threats.

Adam Dyba, 33, of Albuquerque, New Mexico, said Carlin's speech was thought-provoking.

"I think we forget when we design a system how vulnerabilities can be exploited," said the senior in mechanical engineering at the University of New Mexico. "We forget to look at how people could use the technology for ulterior motives. It was interesting to hear it from someone who deals with it."

Carlin spent the day in Detroit, meeting with U.S. Attorney Barbara McQuade and a dozen of her federal prosecutors who are all part of the Justice Department's National Security team in the Eastern District of Michigan.

"You have one of the country's leaders in Barb McQuade on national security threats. She leads the national group of U.S. attorneys who think about these issues and come up with new ways to confront them," said Carlin, referencing the work of McQuade and her team on convicted terrorist and underwear bomber Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab.

Abdulmutallab is serving a life sentence at the Supermax federal prison in Colorado for trying to blow up a plane over Metro Detroit on Christmas Day 2009 with a bomb hidden in his underwear.

On Tuesday afternoon, Carlin and McQuade were heading up a roundtable discussion in Metro Detroit with auto industry officials as well as tier-one suppliers to discuss preventative cyber security.

Let's Build A Terrorist-proof Car, Or At Least Try

By Tresa Baldas

[Detroit Free Press](#), April 12, 2016

In its quest to build connected and self-driving cars, the automotive industry is facing a daunting task that national security experts say is a must: Design a car that's terrorist-proof — or at least try.

With 220 million Internet connected cars expected to be on the roads within five years, a national security expert visited Detroit Tuesday and urged automakers to be mindful of the growing cyber-security threats posed by terrorists, information crooks and spies who could potentially try to hack into wired vehicles and cause mayhem of all sorts.

While there are no known cases of terrorists hacking a connected car, the Department of Justice official stressed that automakers need to try to stay one step ahead of any potential hackers and ask:

"What are the bad buys thinking? We've seen them be creative before," said Assistant Attorney General for National Security John Carlin, who met with auto executives and law enforcement personnel at Cobo Center at a presentation titled, "Emerging National Security Cyber Threats and Their Implications for the C-Suite."

During his speech, Carlin reminded the audience about last year's intentional hacking of a sports utility vehicle by security researchers, who hijacked a Jeep Cherokee over the Internet. They managed to turn the steering wheel, disable the brakes and shut down the engine — among other things — triggering the eventual recall of nearly 1.5 million vehicles.

"It doesn't take much imagination to see how similar vulnerabilities could be used against us by our adversaries to bring about horrific results," Carlin said.

Carlin spoke on national security cyber threats and economic espionage at the opening management program of the SAE 2016 World Congress. He addressed the growing threat posed by sophisticated computer intrusions to the transportation sector and the economy at large, as well as the role the government and private sector must play in protecting companies before, during and after a serious hack.

In a sit-down interview with reporters, Carlin stressed that his reason for visiting Detroit was not to raise panic or stir fear, but to encourage automakers to assess the security risks associated with connected cars before anything bad happens.

"It's better in every respect to think of the risk on the front end," Carlin said, later adding: "We can't play catch up ... Assume the worst."

Concerns about cybersecurity in the automotive industry began to emerge several years ago. In 2014, a group of automakers and suppliers led by Delphi, Battelle, the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers and the Association of Global Automakers banded together to form a coalition to study cyber security issues.

Last year, two car hacking reports vaulted automotive cyber security into national headlines: In February, "60 Minutes" demonstrated how a car could be hacked as Lesley Stahl was driving the vehicle. In June, Wired Magazine published a story detailing how two researchers took control of a Jeep Cherokee.

But both events took place under a highly controlled environments and were orchestrated by hackers who had spent a lot of time targeting a specific vehicle. To date, there haven't been any documented cases of real-world, malicious car hacking.

Still, both reports elevated public concerns and set off alarm bells within the automotive industry, cyber security experts said today at an Automotive Press Association event.

Carlin noted how the auto industry has taken technology to a whole new level, making cars that can be opened by fingerprints, driven by themselves and shut down through the push of a button from anywhere. Connected cars in particular will soon hit the market by storm.

Carlin cited one estimate that shows by 2020, 75 percent of new cars shipped will have Internet connectivity. There could be 220 million so-called connected cars on the road by then, each with more than 200 sensors. These cars will allow drivers to stream music, look up movie times, get real-time updates about traffic and weather conditions, he said.

But there's more, Carlin said, noting that by 2022, driverless cars will be able to navigate crowded city streets; By 2025, the driverless car market will be worth \$42 billion.

"You can easily see how the auto industry makes for a valuable target for hackers of all stripes. You have valuable information and infrastructure that they want," Carlin said.

In recent years, the country has witnessed a number of computer hacking incidents involving foreign spies, organized crime and terrorists.

For example, in a 2014 attack on Sony, what was believed to be North Korean-sponsored hackers damaged company computer systems, compromised valuable information, and released corporate data and intellectual property.

Most recently, seven hackers affiliated with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps were indicted last month for alleged hacking-attacks against the financial sector, costing tens of millions of dollars in remediation costs and locking hundreds of thousands of customers out of their accounts. One of the defendants also allegedly hacked into the computer system of the Bowman Dam in New York, which allowed him to obtain information regarding the status and operation of the dam.

"Every sector of the economy is a target – infrastructure, financial institutions, entertainment, agriculture, energy and yes, the auto industry," Carlin said.

Brent Snively contributed to this report.

Internet-Connected Cars A Hacker Magnet, U.S. Official Says

By Chris Strohm

[Bloomberg News](#), April 12, 2016

Internet-connected and driverless cars could be targets for hackers – potentially including terrorists and hostile nations – so the automotive industry must ensure vehicles have built-in cybersecurity protection, a top U.S. Justice Department official said.

"There is no Internet-connected system where you can build a wall that's high enough or deep enough to keep a dedicated nation-state adversary or a sophisticated criminal group out of the system," John Carlin, U.S. assistant attorney general for national security, said Tuesday at an auto industry conference in Detroit.

The burgeoning market for cars connected to the Internet is expected to be valued at about \$42 billion by 2025, with more than 220 million vehicles on the roads. Companies are expanding investments in telematics, which combines computers and wireless technology to provide services such as infotainment and real-time traffic updates to moving vehicles. Toyota Motor Corp., Google, Ford Motor Co., and Baidu Inc. intend to introduce driverless cars in as soon as five years.

U.S. agencies and regulators are trying to make the auto industry more aware of cyber threats and quicker in acting to plug security gaps, Carlin said, and agencies can share information about threats with companies.

"This will be the next battlefield," Carlin told reporters after his keynote speech at the SAE 2016 World Congress.

"Right now what we have is this combination of carrots and sticks, and there's not a one-size-fits-all protocol that's been mandated by statute."

Questions about the auto industry's responsiveness were raised last year when Fiat Chrysler Automobiles NV waited 18 months to tell federal safety regulators about a security flaw in radios being installed in more than a million vehicles that security researchers exploited in July, seizing control of a Jeep just to show it could be done. The episode led to the recall of almost 1.5 million vehicles – the first auto recall prompted by cybersecurity concerns.

Carlin said government agencies and companies across different industries are in the "early days" of dealing with rapid technological change and with laws and regulations on cybersecurity that are "very unsettled." For the most part, the government encourages companies to take steps voluntarily to secure their products and services.

U.S. officials also want the auto industry to be aware of threats that other industries face and think about ways to work together and with the government to safeguard emerging technologies, according to Carlin.

Hackers of all varieties could try to do harm through connected cars, he said.

"If you were able to do something that could affect a large scale of an industry – like 100,000 cars – you could see that being in the arsenal of a nation-state's tool kit as a new form of warfare," he said.

"We've seen rogue nation states try to assassinate those that do not share their beliefs," Carlin said. "If they were able to do it remotely through a car, I don't see why they consider that a safe zone."

The National Security Issue No One Is Talking About

By Anne-Marie Slaughter And Elizabeth Weingarten
[TIME](#), April 12, 2016

Slaughter is the President of New America and author of *Unfinished Business*. Weingarten is Director of the Global Gender Parity Initiative at New America.

At first, it might sound like just another lack-of-women-in-technology story. But the story of women in cybersecurity is different. That's because the dearth of women in the field is making all of us less safe.

To understand why, it's first important to clarify what cybersecurity is, exactly. Cybersecurity is the intersection of technology and national security, the place where we define the policies, systems and practices that keep us and our information secure both on and offline. These policies don't just extend to businesses and governments—they create safer systems for our families, our communities and our country.

Part of the reason why the gender gap exists is nestled in the very name "cybersecurity." The industry represents a unique and potent collision of military and tech culture—two fields that have traditionally been dominated by men, and have thus been shaped by male priorities, schedules and preferences. Indeed, the terms "cybersecurity" and "cyberwar" are artifacts of the Cold War era. They summon up Dr. Strangelove more than rocket girls.

Yet attracting a broader set of people and experiences and confronting the historically narrow idea of who belongs in the field is essential to the industry's survival. As Betsy Cooper, executive director of Berkeley's Center for Long-Term Security and a panelist at New America's cybersecurity conference, wrote recently: "We need sociologists, psychologists, lawyers, and economists to understand human behavior; designers and data scientists to help change that behavior; and businesspeople and bio-scientists to bring products to market."

Cybersecurity recruiters have a long way to go. Women comprise only 10% of the information security workforce. That's lower than the percentage of female web developers (34%) and programmers (23%). Moreover, the industry will face a staff shortage of 1.5 million people by 2020, according to recent research. The current population of the nation's computer science departments is just not going to get us there—in 2014, there were only 82,700 combined masters, bachelors and PhDs earned in computer science, according to analysis from the National Science Foundation.

It's not just the staffing shortage that's making us less safe. We're also less secure when the people designing cybersecurity products and solutions aren't representative of the population that's using them. Gender, socioeconomic status, race and other identities can all influence how people perceive security interventions (i.e., those pop-ups telling you to update or install software, or warning you not to navigate to a certain page), use software, conceive of their right to privacy online, and what they think they need to do to protect themselves from cyber threats.

For instance, some early research shows that women may react to or address perceived cybersecurity threats in different ways. They are more likely, according to Pew, to restrict social-media access to their friends only. Another study in the U.K. found that women were more likely than men to set up privacy settings on their accounts. That may be in part because women are more likely than men to be harassed online. A 2015 U.N. Broadband Commission report found that about 75% of women who are online have experienced some kind of cyber violence.

Those disparate experiences may prompt women in the cybersecurity field to approach or design security solutions differently. "In my career, I've noticed that female analysts and engineers often ask different questions when working on online security and safety, such as around ways to protect

vulnerable demographics,” Jen Weedon, an analyst at Facebook, told us via email. “These analysts frequently think about security in a much broader way than some male engineers.” She explained that women may be more sensitive to online privacy breaches because they can be disproportionately impacted by certain types of attacks.

In the cybersecurity field, it’s especially important to design systems and structures that take into account the unique sensitivities and experiences of the entire population—women and men from every demographic and walk of life. That’s because we know that the failure of a single individual to protect themselves properly online can compromise an entire business, community or government. It’s imperative that cybersecurity professionals design products and solutions that everyone in a population can and will use. Put another way, if we want women, men, young people, older people, people of color or any other demographic to use a cybersecurity product, they should be part of designing that product. That’s a basic tenet of Silicon Valley, enshrined as a key principle of user experience design, the backbone of technology product development. For the most part, this mindset has yet to penetrate the cybersecurity field.

You need only look as far as Siri and other digital assistants to see the pernicious effects that homogeneity can have on technology:

A recent study shows

that Siri, Cortana and the rest of the gang can easily help users after they report they’ve had a heart attack—but are flummoxed after hearing “I’ve been raped.” On the flip side, when women are at the designing and engineering table, they are likely to know that heart attack symptoms in women are often very different from those in men and provide a different response when a female voice asks Siri what a heart attack feels like.

Unfortunately, there’s no app or simple technological solution that can narrow the cybersecurity gender gap (yet). But after conducting interviews and condensing the latest research, we’ve identified key lessons for organizations that want to attract more women, and for women who are thinking about getting into the field.

1. Look at how your organization advertises its products and cybersecurity positions.

Do the photos on your website or in company ads primarily depict white men? Do your job descriptions use language like “cyber ninja”—a term that research shows repel women? Since we know that women tend to be more attracted to positions that have a clear communal, mission-driven or human-centered impact, you can emphasize in ads and job descriptions that cybersecurity is about protecting the security of co-workers, about advancing a larger corporate mission, and about setting up systems that will make all of us more safe.

2. Give managers the tools and support they need to address overwork culture.

While the online and remote nature of much cybersecurity work is in some ways perfect for employees who need flexible schedules to combine breadwinning and caregiving responsibilities, those same qualities can also exacerbate overwork culture—the pressure many employees feel to be connected to their office 24/7.

Harvard research shows that the culture of overwork is a bigger obstacle to women in the workplace than a lack of family friendly policies like paternal leave and flex-time. That’s in part because the majority of caregiving work still falls to women, but if women take advantage of flex-time policies to fulfill these responsibilities, that ends up stalling their careers because they’re viewed as less committed to their jobs.

3. Recognize that the cybersecurity field needs diverse backgrounds and experiences in order to thrive.

It’s easy to assume that only one type of person makes a successful cybersecurity employee—the person that majored in computer science or something similarly tech-focused. Research shows that’s just not true: The field needs people with lots of different backgrounds to solve its thorniest problems, and to produce more sustainable policies, programs and practices. So start advertising at sociology conferences!

As our lives move ever more online, cybersecurity will simply become security. What it takes to keep us safe and protect our rights and liberties when we shop, talk, vote, play, learn, court and work online will be what it takes to keep us safe and protect our rights and liberties—period. We will need all the intelligence, talent and imagination we can find. It has taken centuries to open traditional national security fields to women, including the military itself. Cybersecurity can’t wait.

NATIONAL SECURITY NEWS

ISIS’ More Flexible Strategy Poses Preeminent Threat

[Roll Call](#), April 12, 2016

The Islamic State has broken away from al-Qaida’s highly centralized approach to terrorism, opting instead for a more flexible, opportunistic model for attacks in Europe that gives operatives more autonomy and presents fewer opportunities for Western security services to thwart plots, current and former U.S. officials say.

While investigators are still chasing leads in the Brussels bombings, those attacks and the earlier rampage in Paris have provided greater insight into how the Islamic State runs its external operations, how its approach to terrorism differs from al-Qaida’s and what opportunities and challenges that presents for combating the group.

With the fight against the Islamic State show no signs of slowing down, President Barack Obama is to meet with his national security team Wednesday at CIA headquarters to discuss the administration's strategy.

The Islamic State, which grew out of al-Qaida's branch in Iraq, has eclipsed its parent organization to become the preeminent global jihadi group since it declared its caliphate in mid-2014 in territory it controls in Syria and Iraq. It now presents a more formidable adversary to Western counterterrorism efforts, in part because the Islamic State has adapted its terrorism template based off of what worked and failed for al-Qaida.

The differences start with the role of the central leadership. Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, a Syrian who was once held by U.S. forces in Iraq, is the head of what CIA Director John O. Brennan has called the Islamic State's external operations branch.

Al-Adnani is not viewed as a mastermind who micromanages plots in Europe — although he is understood to be more hands-on with operations in the Gulf and Lebanon — but rather as a facilitator who grants operatives the power to take the initiative, experts say.

Individuals appear to be selected to mount attacks in Europe, at least in part, based on their language skills and nationality. They then filter back into Europe to carry out an attack and are given a degree of latitude—just how much is still a matter of debate within counterterrorism circles—on timing and targets.

"When it comes to external attacks, ISIL's pliable nature means that there are fewer opportunities to discover elements of the plots," a U.S. counterterrorism official told CQ Roll Call on condition of anonymity in order to discuss efforts to combat the Islamic State. "This is, in part, because some plots themselves are being hatched and executed by operatives already sent abroad. The lack of rigid assignments within ISIL also means that understanding plots can be challenging because the roles of various parts can change."

Some current and former officials say Islamic State commanders give general guidelines — almost "we want something like this that will have an impact" — and the cell is then allowed to decide more or less how to achieve the desired result.

Sen. Richard M. Burr, the chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, told CQ Roll Call Islamic State militants seem to have a range of options for targets and "there's a bit of latitude almost that the operational cells could choose from that basket of things."

Al-Qaida, in contrast, tended to organize and direct plots from the group's central leadership. An individual would travel to the tribal areas along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, where he would receive training and instructions from al-Qaida's central leadership before being sent back out into the world to conduct an attack.

John McLaughlin, a former deputy director and acting director of the CIA who retired in 2005, said the "improvisational character" of the Islamic State's operations—something officials rarely saw with al-Qaida — makes thwarting plots and dismantling networks "more difficult."

Al-Qaida's strong central control meant that there were often several specific elements to a plot — date, target, operatives — that the United States or its allies could uncover and work off of to try to thwart the plan. If the United States knew what the target was, it could take defensive measures, for instance. Senate Intelligence Chairman Richard M. Burr said ISIS militants seem to have a range of options for targets. (Photo By Bill Clark/CQ Roll Call)

The flexibility of the Islamic State's attack model makes that harder to do.

"You could pull on the end of a (al-Qaida plot) thread and start to unravel it," the U.S. counterterrorism official said. "With ISIL, you can pull on threads but (they) may not lead anywhere because sometimes, until the last minute, there is no date, there may be no place and not all the people have been integrated into the plot."

That lack of a set target also makes it difficult to predict what the Islamic State will try to hit, since seemingly anything and everything is judged fair game.

"You don't know what their targeting mindset is going to be," said Clint Watts, a former FBI counterterrorism agent who is now a Fox Fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute. "We could kind of think through al-Qaida and say 'ah, they're not going to hit a shopping mall because they're actually kind of worried about women and civilian casualties, or it's not a symbolic target.'"

With the Islamic State, he said, "it's harder to anticipate the targets."

Several factors allow the extremist group to operate with this amount of flexibility.

First, the Islamic State has a large number of people it can pull from for its operations. With the help of its aggressive online recruiting and battlefield success, the group has attracted tens of thousands of foreign fighters, some 5,000 of whom have Western passports. That gives the group a large pool of individuals with EU identity papers to draw from for operations in Europe—something al-Qaida sought but never had.

"The access problem is different than it was with al-Qaida, where they just simply didn't have that many people with Western passports — that was a big deal for them," McLaughlin said. "Here you've got a large number of Western passports and people who can move in Schengen and people who can come to the United States without a visa requirement." An American flag flies at half-staff over Russell Building in honor of those who perished in the Brussels terrorist attacks. (Photo By Tom Williams/CQ Roll Call)

The Islamic State also has a network of sympathetic individuals who haven't fought in Syria and Iraq but who are ready to help support a plot, such as Ibrahim and Khalid el-Bakraoui, two Belgian brothers who blew themselves up in Brussels.

European-born or raised Islamic State operatives also can easily blend back in to the cities and neighborhoods they came from in a way that al-Qaida operatives often could not.

"They can move so much quicker because they're plotting, planning at home, they've got a support network like al-Qaida guys didn't have in these countries," Watts said.

The people who have fought in Syria and Iraq and returned to Europe have come back trained and battle-hardened, with experience using small arms and explosives.

"They're using explosives that al-Qaida couldn't operate because the Islamic State's operatives just have so much battlefield experience. They've cooked TATP a dozen times," Watts said, referring to the kind of homemade explosives used in the Paris and Brussels attacks.

All told, it presents a formidable new challenge for Western intelligence services to try to disrupt and dismantle such networks.

"I think European services are dealing with a volume of work and a volume of potential extremists that exceeds anything al-Qaida was ever able to field," McLaughlin said. "In al-Qaida's successful attacks in London and Madrid after 9/11, there were a handful of people involved. They did succeed to a degree, but those were very isolated attacks and we didn't see the potential for them repeating over and over again."

The Islamic State has already demonstrated the ability to follow up on the bloodshed in Paris with another round in Brussels, and investigators are scrambling to try to roll up the network before another attack can take place.

Belgian authorities arrested on Friday Mohamed Abrini, who has confessed to being a third attacker at the airport. Abrini was caught on surveillance video wearing a hat and walking with the two other suicide bombers. Explosives in Abrini's bag did not detonate.

As much of a challenge as the Islamic State's approach to terrorism in Europe poses, it is not without its vulnerabilities.

Many of the group's operatives are known to law enforcement — although not as terrorism suspects — because of previous criminal activity, the counterterrorism official said. That means that authorities may have information on the militants themselves, their family and their friends.

"Because these networks overlap or resemble criminal networks, it is a model the law enforcement agencies and interior ministries are familiar with," the official said.

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U.S. Military Campaign Takes Toll On ISIS' Cash Flow

By Matthew Rosenberg, Helene Cooper And Nicholas Kulich

[New York Times](#), April 12, 2016

WASHINGTON — American airstrikes have killed 25,000 Islamic State fighters in Iraq and Syria and incinerated millions of dollars plundered by the militants, according to Pentagon officials.

Iraqi and Kurdish forces have taken back 40 percent of the militant group's land in Iraq, the officials say, and forces backed by the West have seized a sizable amount of territory in Syria that had been controlled by the Islamic State, also known as ISIS or ISIL.

But the battlefield successes enjoyed by Western-backed forces in the Islamic State's heartland have done little to stop the expansion of the militants to Europe, North Africa and Afghanistan. The attacks this year in Brussels, Istanbul and other cities only reinforced the sense of a terrorist group on the march, and among American officials and military experts, there is renewed caution in predicting progress in a fight that they say is likely to go on for years.

"Even as we advance our efforts to defeat Daesh on the front lines," Deputy Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken told a congressional committee on Tuesday, using another name for the Islamic State, "we know that to be fully effective, we must work to prevent the spread of violent extremism in the first place — to stop the recruitment, radicalization and mobilization of people, especially young people, to engage in terrorist activities."

Instead of engaging a pseudo-state in the Middle East whose fighters have proved susceptible to American airpower, the United States and its European allies must now also engage in a far more complex struggle against homegrown militants who need relatively few resources to sow bloodshed in the West.

"Defeating the formal military presence of a terrorist group will not significantly mitigate the threat of lone wolf or small independent cells that are based in the West," said Jonathan Schanzer, a former terrorism finance analyst at the Treasury Department who is now with the Foundation for Defense of Democracies in Washington.

Attacks in the West are cheap to finance — Mr. Schanzer estimated that the cost of the materials used in the Brussels attack and the lab needed to make the explosives, for instance, was \$10,000 to \$15,000. And, he added: "You can defeat ISIS in ISIS-controlled territories, but you're not going to defeat ISIS itself. The ideology of jihadism continues to evolve and continues to exist."

While some officials have sought to portray the recent attacks in Europe and Turkey as evidence that the Islamic State is growing desperate as a result of its battlefield losses,

far more officials and experts see the violence as another indication that the Islamic State is not a problem that will be quickly or easily overcome.

Officials on both sides of the Atlantic acknowledge that the Islamic State, which has looted an estimated \$1 billion from bank vaults across Syria and Iraq and is widely seen as one of the richest militant groups of all time, remains a resilient and adaptable battlefield adversary, still able to mount spectacular acts, like the abduction of at least 170 workers from a cement factory near Damascus last week.

In Mosul, Iraq, and in Raqqa, the Syrian city that is the Islamic State's de facto capital, salaries for fighters have been cut in half since last year, according to residents and documents. But even with reduced salaries, American officials say, the Islamic State, which collects hundreds of millions of dollars by extortion, fees and taxes on the people it rules, is still paying its fighters.

"There is no simple tool to separate ISIL from its vast wealth," Daniel L. Glaser, the assistant Treasury secretary for terrorist financing, said recently in a speech in London.

But administration officials say that the twin efforts to militarily shrink the group's dominion in Iraq and Syria and to cut into its finances have fed off each other. The strategic aim is to deprive the militants of the resources they need to wage war by retaking their towns, cities and oil fields, and by American accounts, they have been succeeding.

Since late October, an American air campaign called Operation Tidal Wave II has targeted oil fields, refineries and tanker trucks, and American officials believe they have cut the Islamic State's oil revenue by about a third. On the ground, the Islamic State has lost a series of cities and towns since it seized Ramadi, Iraq, almost a year ago, its last major battlefield victory. Iraqi security forces, backed by American airstrikes, have retaken Ramadi.

Iraqi forces have also retaken the northern city of Baiji, with its oil refinery. And Kurdish and Yazidi forces have driven Islamic State fighters out of the northern city of Sinjar.

In recent weeks, American airstrikes have killed what administration officials said were top Islamic State leaders: the group's minister of war, Omar al-Shishani (Omar the Chechen), and a top commander, Abd al-Rahman Mustafa al-Qaduli. An Islamic State chemical weapons specialist, Sleiman Daoud al-Afari, was captured by American Special Operations forces in February.

At the same time, officials acknowledge that the Islamic State has been able to replace many of its leaders and that taking key figures off the battlefield will not necessarily finish off the group.

Alongside the military efforts to disrupt the Islamic State's finances, the Treasury and its European counterparts are pursuing a number of paths to cut the flow of cash to the group and to keep it from using the international banking system. They persuaded Iraq to prohibit bank branches in

cities and towns held by the Islamic State from making international transfers, instead ordering all requests to be routed through the central bank in Baghdad, where they can, in theory, be intercepted and stopped.

The United States, European countries and the United Nations have also all sought to add people or companies associated with the Islamic State to financial blacklists.

In addition, American officials prevailed upon the Iraqi government to finally stop paying salaries to its officials and workers who live in areas controlled by the Islamic State. The payments totaled about \$170 million a year, American officials said, and the Islamic State skimmed off about 10 percent or more of each paycheck in taxes.

The falling price of oil, which the militants typically sell on the black market for about half the going rate, has also hurt the Islamic State, American and European officials believe. This time last year, oil was selling for nearly \$60 a barrel; it is now around \$45.

Coalition airstrikes have in the meantime hit at least 10 depots where the Islamic State stored hard currency. In January, American aircraft struck what officials said was a particularly rich stockpile, and video taken in the moments after the building was hit by a bomb showed plumes of currency fluttering through the air.

The military said tens of millions of dollars were incinerated, though other American officials and experts were less bullish.

"There's a lot less certainty about how much money actually evaporated," said Howard Shatz, a senior economist at the RAND Corporation who has studied the Islamic State's finances.

Whatever the amount, a siege mentality appears to have developed in territory still held by the Islamic State.

"These days, the situation has changed, and there is a shortage of money in Mosul," Ayham Ali, who sells sandwiches from a wooden cart in Mosul, said in a recent interview.

Obaida Nama, a retired engineer there, said he did not think the Islamic State would last. "The corruption that ISIS is committing is the beginning of its end," he said.

Still, said Derek Chollet, a former top Pentagon official in the Obama administration, "I don't think anyone is going to declare victory now, nor should they."

The Islamic State "is going to be a chronic problem that we're going to have to confront," he added.

Matthew Rosenberg and Helene Cooper reported from Washington, and Nicholas Kulish from New York. Omar Al-Jawshy contributed reporting from Baghdad, and an employee of The New York Times from Erbil, Iraq.

Iraq Border Town Freed From Militants Now Isolated By War

By Balint Szlanko

[Associated Press](#), April 12, 2016

RABIA, Iraq (AP) – Outside the police station, Iraqi men in robes and headscarves wait for permits to leave the dusty border town of Rabia, which was wrested from the Islamic State group 18 months ago but remains isolated and impoverished by the battle lines drawn around it.

To the east is the city of Mosul, still held by IS militants. To the west is the crossing into Syria, but that has been closed by Iraqi Kurdish authorities. The only way out is north to Iraq's largely autonomous Kurdish region, where authorities are suspicious of Rabia's mostly Arab residents and require them to apply to enter.

The isolation is straining the town economy, making it difficult to bring in goods.

"We are living now on livestock alone. There is nothing else," said Sheikh Fadl al-Shammari, a local farmer. "Look at the market. Vegetable prices are going up because of this. Same with other items."

When Iraqi Kurdish forces retook Rabia last year it was a major advance against the Islamic State group, which had swept across northern and western Iraq in the summer of 2014 and declared its "caliphate" across its territory in Iraq and Syria. Now 18 months later, the town demonstrates the difficulties of returning to the way things were before the IS rampage.

The town long relied on cross-border trade, but the crossing into Syria has been closed for months because of the rivalry between Syrian Kurds and Iraqi Kurds. All goods now are imported from the Kurdish semi-autonomous zone, making everything more expensive in Rabia.

"We hope that our Kurdish brothers will agree among each other because the closure of the border has affected us a lot. We are a border town," said Sheikh Khaled Ahmad Safuq al-Shammari, the town's tribal leader.

Residents are also cut off from the central government in Baghdad. The town's farmers long relied on the central government, which bought their wheat at guaranteed price, higher than the market price, but those payments halted with the IS takeover and haven't resumed. Most municipal employees quit after not being paid for months.

Tribal militias and Kurdish forces provide security in the town, and the Kurds view the Sunni Arab residents with suspicion of being IS sympathizers. The Kurds have barred non-resident Arabs from entering their autonomous zone in the north, but have made an exception for Rabia, though the townspeople require permits. Kurdish police say the permits are regularly provided. But residents say the process can take a day or two, the crossing is not always open and security checks extend the journey.

"It is not like you just go up there freely, spend a couple of days and come back – no," said Ahmad Dhanoun, a local resident. "You go to the police, and if you have an ill person

with you, or you have a case, then they give their approval. Otherwise, no."

A Kurdish security official in Rabia said the procedures were necessary to make sure residents don't represent a threat.

Families displaced from surrounding villages have poured into Rabia. Kurdish authorities have barred residents from returning to some villages because they suspect their Sunni Arab residents cooperated with IS. Rights groups say some villages in the area have been destroyed outright.

Ahmad Arbo Howayit, from a village just north of Rabia, has lived in the town with his family for more than a year, renting a place to stay. He said he's been barred from returning home but no one told him why.

"We don't know what's going on. I guess the government knows," he said.

Associated Press Writer Salar Salim contributed to this report.

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Iraqi Lawmakers Protest After Vote On New Cabinet Is Delayed

By Susannah George

[Associated Press](#), April 12, 2016

BAGHDAD (AP) – Iraqi lawmakers staged a protest inside the country's parliament on Tuesday after a vote on new Cabinet nominees proposed by the prime minister was postponed earlier in the day.

Haider al-Abadi presented the Cabinet reshuffle after weeks of pressure from influential Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr and thousands of his followers who staged weekly rallies in Baghdad.

After the vote was postponed, dozens of lawmakers refused to leave the parliament building's main hall, demanding the resignation of the country's top political leadership and an end to the current system of government dominated by powerful political blocs determined by sectarian quotas, according to video posted to social media and lawmakers who took part in the protest.

"We will remain inside the parliament until our demands are met," Sunni lawmaker Mishan al-Jabouri posted to his Facebook page along with footage of the sit in.

After night fell, the lawmakers remained inside parliament in an unusual sit-in. The protesting lawmakers were representatives from across the country's political

spectrum, reflecting the current broad opposition to Iraqi political leadership and frustration with the slow pace of reforms that are meant to address corruption and mismanagement.

Al-Abadi last month proposed a new lineup of Cabinet ministers and reduced the number of ministerial seats from 21 to 16. He left the incumbent ministers of defense and interior in place due to the ongoing war against the Islamic State group in the country's north and west.

The political crisis has rocked Baghdad and put a significant burden on al-Abadi, threatening to become a more destabilizing factor for the country, even as authorities wage war against the Islamic State group.

The measure saw instant opposition from Iraq's political blocs, which rely on patronage systems to remain in power. Several of the Cabinet nominees subsequently withdrew from the list, claiming they didn't desire the posts.

Iraq is grappling with entrenched corruption, exacerbated by a deepening financial crisis and the fight against the IS group. Many Iraqis blame corruption and mismanagement for squandering profits when the price of oil was high.

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Syria Peace Talks Set To Resume Amid New Fighting

By Oren Dorell

[USA Today](#), April 12, 2016

The prospects for Syrian peace talks set to resume Wednesday in Geneva are complicated by a recent spike in fighting between government troops and rebel factions around the strategic city of Aleppo.

"We are very, very concerned about the recent increase in violence," State Department spokesman Mark Toner said this week about the next round of indirect talks, the second since the "cessation of hostilities" or partial cease-fire began Feb. 27.

Toner said the fighting includes "actions we believe are in contravention to the cessation of hostilities."

Syrian government troops, backed by Russian aircraft, have been attacking U.S.-backed rebel groups around Aleppo, as well as al-Qaeda's local affiliate, the Nusra Front, also in the area, Toner said. He said U.S. negotiators plan to use the peace talks to push the parties to adhere to the cease-fire agreement, which allows attacks on the Nusra

Front and the Islamic State, but not on "legitimate" opposition groups.

In a new offensive launched Tuesday, Syrian troops sought to retake a hilltop village south of Aleppo from militants, including the Nusra Front, the Associated Press reported.

United Nations special envoy Staffan de Mistura, who will conduct the talks, said Tuesday that establishing a path to a political transition is "crucially urgent." He has said the talks will focus on political transition, governance and constitutional principles, according to AFP.

The Syrian government will also hold parliamentary elections Wednesday, adding another element that could muddle the talks in Geneva. Voting will be only in areas controlled by the government. The opposition says the election further damages the climate for negotiations.

Syria's opposition, supported by the United States, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, wants Syrian President Bashar Assad to step down, but Assad and his Russian and Iranian backers want him to stay, at least through presidential elections that would decide his fate.

Those issues seem likely to take a back seat to the recent burst of fighting near Aleppo.

Last week, rebels fighting alongside Nusra Front shot down a Syrian fighter jet, the second in the conflict, and captured its pilot, prompting the government to promise a new campaign to drive out the "terrorists."

Over the weekend, the Nusra Front attacked government troops near Aleppo. Syrian troops responded with force, raising fears they would try to retake Aleppo, a rebel stronghold that has used its proximity to the Turkish border to replenish supplies and fighters throughout the five-year civil war.

"The cease-fire cut off some very unfinished business around Aleppo, which the regime is trying to retake," said Joshua Landis, a Syria analyst at the University of Oklahoma.

Syrian government troops are trying to retake the entire border with Turkey, which is controlled in various segments by Kurdish militias, Turkey-supported rebels and Islamic State factions, Landis said.

"The Syrian government is more concerned about the areas it hasn't captured where other Arab militias can get arms and resupplies from Turkey," he said. "So the cease-fire was going to be broken, it was a matter of when."

And all sides have used the respite from the fighting to resupply, Landis said.

Russia announced on March 14, that it would withdraw most of its airplanes that conducted a six-month bombing campaign in support of Assad's forces. Russia has since sent more equipment and supplies to Syria, according to Reuters.

Those supplies apparently include helicopters equipped with missile-jamming devices, Landis said.

Turkey and Saudi Arabia also have been resupplying the rebels who are flush with arms, Landis said.

Charles Lister, a Syria analyst at the Middle East Institute with close ties to opposition fighters, said there is evidence that Syrian rebel factions now have shoulder-fired, anti-aircraft missiles.

Toner admitted it's difficult to distinguish between the various fighting groups. "These groups are on top of each other," he said. "It's a very ... complex."

Syria Talks To Resume Amid Disputes, Escalating Violence

By Bassem Mroue

[Associated Press](#), April 12, 2016

BEIRUT (AP) – Indirect peace talks between Syria's warring parties are scheduled to resume in Geneva on Wednesday, the third round this year. There are two main groups at the negotiations in Switzerland, in addition to others that were invited by the United Nations as advisers.

The U.N. envoy for Syria says the talks this time are to focus on a political transition in the war-torn country, but chances for a breakthrough are slim as distrust and continuing disagreements between rival factions remain deep.

Here's a look at the talks:

BACKDROP OF VIOLENCE

The talks this week resume amid an escalation, with clashes underway mainly between government forces and militants, mainly near the northern Syrian city of Aleppo. The fighting could endanger a truce brokered by Russia and the United States that has mostly held since going into effect on Feb. 27. The first round of talks collapsed earlier in February amid a government offensive on Aleppo, Syria's largest city and once its commercial center. U.N. special envoy Staffan de Mistura said after talks with officials in Damascus earlier this week that keeping the truce was key, describing the cease-fire as fragile and stressing that all sides "need to make sure that it continues to be sustained."

MAIN PLAYERS

The main players are the Syrian government, which is backed by Iran, Russia and Lebanon's Hezbollah group, and the main opposition faction, the High Negotiations Committee or HNC, which includes groups that are backed by Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. The Islamic State group and al-Qaida's branch in Syria known as the Nusra Front are not taking part in the talks because they are opposed to negotiations and are considered terrorist organizations by the U.N.

WHO IS ATTENDING

The Syrian government delegation is headed by the country's ambassador to the U.N., Bashar Ja'afari, while the HNC's chief negotiator is Mohammed Alloush of the rebel

group Jaysh al-Islam or Army of Islam. Other opposition groups are taking part in Geneva as well, including members of the internal opposition that has been tolerated by President Bashar Assad. All opposition groups other than the HNC were invited to Geneva by de Mistura as advisers so as not to anger the HNC, which considers itself the sole representative of the opposition.

MAIN POINTS OF DISAGREEMENT

The Syrian government delegation says the priority in the "proximity talks" should be on fighting terrorism while the HNC says the focus should be on setting up a Transitional Government Body with full executive powers in which Assad will have no role. The government says Assad was elected by the people and any talk about removing him from power is a red line. Over the past months, Syrian troops have captured wide areas from militants under the cover of Russian airstrikes. Syrian legislator and member of Assad's ruling Baath party Sharif Shehadeh says "the problem of the opposition is that it ... is still talking about a transitional government. This will not happen in Syria under any circumstances, even if this means prolonging the war for one hundred years."

WHO IS ABSENT

The Syrian Kurds, or rather, the Kurdish Democratic Union Party, PYD, and its military wing known as the People's Protection Units or YPG have not been invited to the talks. The U.S.-backed YPG has been the most effective force in fighting the Islamic State group in northern and eastern Syria. Although they consider themselves opposed to Assad, the HNC considers the PYD and YPG as pro-government. The Syrian Kurds' move to set up a federal region in northern Syria has angered both the government and the HNC.

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Syria Pushes Offensive On Eve Of Elections, Talks In Geneva

By Zeina Karam And Philip Issa

[Associated Press](#), April 12, 2016

DAMASCUS, Syria (AP) – Syrian government troops pushed an offensive Tuesday against militants in the country's north on the eve of parliament elections – a vote that is expected to rubber-stamp an assembly loyal to President Bashar Assad ahead of a new round of peace talks in Geneva resuming this week.

Damascus says the vote, which will only be held in areas controlled by the government, is constitutional and separate from the talks aimed at ending the war. But the opposition says it contributes to an increasingly unfavorable climate for negotiations amid fierce fighting that threatens an increasingly crumbling cease-fire engineered by the United States and Russia.

The new offensive, launched by Syrian troops and their allies Tuesday, seeks to retake an important hilltop village south of the city of Aleppo from militants, including al-Qaida's local affiliate.

Al-Manar TV, run by Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group, which is fighting alongside Syrian government forces, reported the offensive to retake the village of Tel al-Ais. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an activist-run monitoring group, said clashes were ongoing around Tel al-Ais and the nearby village of Khan Touman.

The Observatory said dozens of troops and pro-government fighters were killed in Tuesday's clashes in Aleppo province, without providing precise figures.

Tel al-Ais overlooks a supply line connecting the capital, Damascus, to the northern city of Aleppo, parts of which have been held by groups opposed to the government since 2012. Militants captured Tel al-Ais earlier this month after heavy fighting despite the U.S.-Russian-brokered truce, which excludes the al-Qaida-affiliated Nusra Front.

The Syrian National Coalition, an Istanbul-based opposition group, said the offensive in Aleppo is a violation of the cease-fire, warning that the agreement will lose all meaning if the attacks continue unheeded.

The fighting comes as U.N. brokered indirect peace talks are set to resume on Wednesday in Geneva where the U.N. envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, will be meeting with an umbrella opposition coalition backed by Saudi Arabia, the United States and other Western powers.

The Syrian government says its delegation will arrive in Geneva on Friday, once the balloting in the parliament elections is completed.

De Mistura has said this upcoming round of talks will focus on a political transition in Syria, but government officials say any talk of Assad's departure is a red line.

In Damascus, streets were festooned with posters of campaigning candidates on the eve of the elections. Voting for parliament is held every four years in Syria.

The overriding theme was the grinding war, now in its sixth year. "Hand in hand, we will rebuild," said a candidate's slogan, written in Arabic over his photograph. "For the sake of our children who have died, we will continue," read another poster.

Around 3,500 government-approved candidates are competing for seats in Syria's 250-seat parliament, after more than 7,000 others dropped out.

The election, in which soldiers are being allowed to vote for the first time, will be conducted only in areas under government control. Western leaders and members of the opposition have denounced the process as a sham and a provocation that undermines the Geneva peace talks.

The government says the election is constitutional and has nothing to do with a roadmap for peace agreed on by international powers, which envisions free elections in Syria after a new constitution is drawn and a political transition begins.

In Damascus, many residents rejected voices from abroad calling the elections a farce.

"The Syrian people represent themselves, they don't need anyone from outside to tell them this is right or wrong," said Mahmoud Hilal, a resident who was visiting Damascus from the eastern, Islamic State-held Deir-el-Zour province.

Samer Dabboura, a Damascus resident, said elections are a national duty for every Syrian. "It's a duty for me to choose who should represent us in this parliament, because it is our voice. It is not fake or mandatory, or as they say being forced on us."

Sharif Shehadeh, a member of the current parliament running for re-election, acknowledged that the elections are not perfect or consensual but said those who criticize from abroad have an agenda.

"I'm not saying elections in Syria are like elections in Switzerland but it's a stage that we must assist in as Syrians to move forward toward the future," Shehadeh said.

Shehadeh said the Syrian leadership was prepared to offer a national unity government that would include members of the opposition, and added that any talk of a transitional government is unacceptable because it would lead to a Libya scenario.

"The opposition is still talking about a transitional government. This will not happen in Syria under any circumstances, even if it means prolonging the war for one hundred years," he said.

Also Tuesday, a Russian helicopter crashed near the central Syrian city of Homs, killing the two pilots.

Russia's Defense Ministry said the Mi-28N helicopter gunship crashed early in the day after completing its mission. It said there was no evidence that it came under fire. The bodies of the pilots were recovered and taken to the Hemeimeem air base on Syria's coast, the ministry said.

Russia has been carrying out airstrikes since Sept. 30 in support of Syrian government forces. The air campaign has allowed Russia to test some of its latest weapons, including the Mi-28N helicopter.

The crash brings to three the number of aircraft that Russia has now lost in Syria. The two others were a Su-24 bomber that was shot down by a Turkish jet in November and a helicopter sent on a rescue mission, which was hit by ground fire.

In northern Syria, Turkish artillery shelled Islamic State targets in the Syrian town of Azaz from across the border, after rockets fired from Syria struck a Turkish border town, according to Turkey's state-run Anadolu news agency.

Two rockets landed in the Turkish town of Kilis on Tuesday, wounding at least eight people. At least four other people were wounded in a similar incident on Monday.

Issa reported from Beirut. Associated Press Writer Albert Aji in Damascus, Syria, contributed to this report.

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Syria's Partial Cease-Fire Shows Signs Of Crumbling

By Anne Barnard

[New York Times](#), April 12, 2016

BEIRUT, Lebanon — A fragile and partial cease-fire in Syria is coming under new strains, with ground clashes and airstrikes intensifying as the government promises a new offensive and prepares to hold controversial parliamentary elections on Wednesday.

France, one of the most outspoken international opponents of Syria's president, Bashar al-Assad, and Iran, his closest ally, both issued warnings that the partial cease-fire, which has lasted far longer than any other and has reduced the daily death toll significantly since Feb. 27, faced the threat of collapse.

A day before the next round of peace talks is set to start, France, along with opposition negotiators, blamed new government attacks in the northern province of Aleppo and the eastern suburbs of the capital, Damascus, for endangering the agreement, while Iran blamed "armed groups" fighting the government. Officials in the United States, too, said they were very concerned about the rise in violence.

The expressions of worry mounted as the special envoy for the United Nations, Staffan de Mistura, traveled to Tehran as part of a regional tour before the talks, which are set to resume in Geneva on Wednesday. After meeting with Iranian officials, he said he had emphasized the need to maintain the partial truce, known as a cessation of hostilities.

But at the same time, the number of violent deaths was increasing. In Talbiseh, an insurgent-held town in Homs Province, a Russian helicopter crashed, killing two pilots, a day after aerial attacks by the government and its allies resumed there at their most intense since the cessation of

hostilities. As many as nine people were killed in the bombings, according to local anti-government activists. Residents posted images online of injured children, including an infant whose skull was crushed.

If the truce crumbles, it would take away a rare measure of relief for Syrian civilians in a war that has killed hundreds of thousands and displaced half the country's population.

But even amid its qualified successes, the partial truce has highlighted the extreme difficulties facing any attempts to make peace between the opposing forces, which remain philosophically as divided as ever. Mr. Assad and his allies insist he can remain in power, while their opponents say there can be no deal with him still in office.

The Geneva talks are aimed at establishing a path toward a political transition, and an agreement last year in Vienna among the international backers of many of the combatants set out an ambitious timetable toward new presidential elections.

The parliamentary elections planned for Wednesday are not part of that timetable, but the Syrian government insisted on holding them in line with the normal electoral schedule. The opposition calls them illegitimate in a country where dissent has been crushed with violence and large areas remain outside government control.

The truce never included the Islamic State or the Nusra Front, nor has it completely stopped indiscriminate attacks on civilians by any side, as the recent violence showed.

"A decrease in casualty numbers brought a much-needed respite for Syrians, but many civilians are still dying in unlawful attacks," Nadim Houry, the deputy Middle East director of Human Rights Watch, said in a statement.

The group warned that both sides had committed attacks on civilians that threatened the cease-fire, citing rebel shelling of mainly Kurdish neighborhoods in the divided city of Aleppo, and government attacks east of Damascus.

In recent days, government warplanes have intensified airstrikes on rebel-held parts of Aleppo, as government officials declare they are launching a new offensive, with Russian air support, to take the areas.

Government and allied forces have also been trying to advance south of Aleppo on the highway to Damascus.

Rebels have waged their own battles against the Islamic State north of Aleppo, taking advantage of the respite from government attacks to battle the extremists, but a town they seized near the Turkish border was retaken by the Islamic State.

Even the increased access to humanitarian aid that was to have been a hallmark of the partial cease-fire has proved challenging. While there have been some successes, like a recent airdrop of food to the eastern city of Deir al-Zour, surrounded by Islamic State fighters, many areas besieged by the government have yet to receive any aid.

And while Mr. de Mistura promised that the new round of talks would lead to “very concrete” measures toward transition, they were set to begin, like previous rounds, with baby steps. They will be proximity talks, meaning the two sides will not sit down together at the same time in the same room, but will meet separately with Mr. de Mistura. The government delegation is not even scheduled to arrive until Friday.

Follow Anne Barnard on Twitter @ABarnardNYT.

US Readies ‘Plan B’ To Arm Syria Rebels

Moderate groups could get antiaircraft weapons if cease-fire collapses, officials say

By Adam Entous

[Wall Street Journal](#), April 12, 2016

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Turkey Strikes At IS Targets After Rockets Hit Border Town

[Associated Press](#), April 12, 2016

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) – Turkish artillery units on Tuesday shelled Islamic State group targets across the border in Syria, officials said, hours after rockets fired from Syria struck a Turkish border town, killing a man and wounding seven people.

Two rockets hit the town of Kilis early in the day in the third such cross-border incident in the past five days. One rocket struck a guesthouse while the second landed on an empty field near a bus terminal, the state-run Anadolu Agency said. Eight people were wounded and one of them – a 42-year-old municipality employee – later died in hospital, the agency reported.

Authorities evacuated children from a nearby youth center that has been turned into a temporary school for Syrian refugees, the report said.

Turkey’s military routinely retaliates to rockets or shells that land on Turkish territory. On Tuesday, artillery units fired at IS targets around the town of Azaz in northern Syria, Anadolu reported.

The agency, citing unidentified security sources, said the targeted IS positions were located around the villages of Sawran, Dabiq, Akhtarín and Ehtemlat and added that the “intensive shelling” was continuing.

Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said the Turkish military had responded to rockets “immediately in line with the rules of engagement.”

“We are determined to take every step that is necessary,” Davutoglu said.

The wider province of Kilis borders areas in Syria that are controlled by the Islamic State group, Syrian Kurdish militia or anti-government Syrian rebels.

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Taliban Threatens To Grind Down Afghan Forces In Spring Offensive

By Tim Craig

[Washington Post](#), April 12, 2016

KABUL — The Taliban on Tuesday signaled the start of its spring offensive in Afghanistan, vowing “large-scale attacks” while also attempting to challenge efforts by the rival Islamic State to emerge as a dominant militant force in the country.

The warm-weather surge in fighting has become something of an annual rite in Afghanistan. But the Taliban declaration this year prompts deeper questions, including about the ability of Afghan security forces to battle the insurgency largely on its own, with most U.S.-led troops having pulled out of the country in late 2014.

The coming months also could test the reach and resilience of the Islamic State in the country.

In a statement, the Taliban’s leadership council said its 2016 offensive will be called Operation Omari, named after the group’s former supreme leader, Mohammad Omar, whose death was publicly announced in July.

“The operation will employ all means at our disposal to bog the enemy down in a war of attrition that lowers the morale of the foreign invaders and their internal armed militias,” the statement said.

The Taliban has made such pronouncements nearly every year since 2001, when it was driven from power in Kabul. Fighting has traditionally subsided in the winter, when snow chokes mountain passes connecting Taliban strongholds in eastern Afghanistan and western Pakistan.

This year, though, a relatively mild winter ensured that there was not much of a lull in the fighting. Still, military commanders and Western analysts think upcoming battles could be crucial in evaluating the strength of the Afghan security forces.

Last year, after the U.S.-led coalition withdrew all but 13,500 troops, the Taliban made steady gains in southern, eastern and northern Afghanistan. At the same time, it faced an internal leadership struggle after news leaked that Omar had been dead for years.

The Taliban was also impeded by clashes that erupted against fighters aligned with the Islamic State, which is trying to gain a foothold in northeastern Afghanistan.

On Monday night, the Taliban released a letter that it claimed was written by several former Islamic State commanders pledging allegiance to the Taliban's new supreme leader, Akhtar Mohammad Mansour. The letter was obtained by the SITE Intelligence Group, which monitors militant groups.

"Due to the ambitious, blind policies of [the Islamic State], their wanton killing, beatings, persecution, looting, burning and usurping land . . . our mind could not permit us to stay," the letter states.

One of the militants who purportedly switched allegiance was an "important insurgent commander" in Nangahar province, where scores of Islamic State and Taliban fighters have been killed battling one another, according to Ahmad Ali Hazrat, head of the provincial council.

But other Afghan officials and U.S. military commanders are skeptical that the alleged defections represent a decisive shift in the broader rivalry between the groups.

Haji Ghalib, a district governor in Nangahar, said the Islamic State remains the dominant militant group in that province because it has more money and better weapons.

"I think the Taliban are lying. The Taliban are so weak compared to IS, financially and on the battlefield. The fighters from the strong side will never join the weaker side," Ghalib said, using initials to refer to the Islamic State.

Brig. Gen. Charles Cleveland, chief of communications for the U.S.-led coalition, noted that the Islamic State maintains a focus on "global issues" while the Taliban emphasizes "more nationalistic issues."

Still, Cleveland said, the coalition is concerned that Mansour has been successful in unifying some of the major strains of Islamist militancy in Afghanistan, which could compound the challenge facing Afghan forces this year.

Last year, al-Qaeda chief Ayman al-Zawahiri pledged allegiance to Mansour. The Pakistan-based Haqqani network, responsible for some of the bloodiest attacks of the war, also has aligned with Mansour. Sirajuddin Haqqani, a leader of the group, has spearheaded efforts to unite disaffected Taliban members behind Mansour, Pakistan's Express Tribune newspaper reported.

"Clearly, Mansour has been working overtime to essentially consolidate his command and control," Cleveland said.

If there is less infighting among Islamist militants, Cleveland said, the Taliban may be able to expand and refine its battlefield tactics.

U.S. commanders are especially concerned that the Taliban will "try to pressure" the northern city of Kunduz, which the group briefly overran last fall, and urban centers in the southern Helmand province.

"We also think they will try to mark the fighting season with a variety of spectacular attacks, be it here in Kabul or perhaps in Jalalabad," Cleveland said.

But unlike last year, U.S. military commanders expect that the Afghan army will be "more offensive" this year. In addition to more aggressive tactics, Cleveland noted that the Afghan military recently began using its own attack helicopters and A-29 bombers against Taliban targets.

"We have spoken of our willingness for peace, but when the insurgents talk of offensives, we are fully prepared for war, too," said Dawa Khan Minapal, a spokesman for President Ashraf Ghani.

There are major doubts, though, about the ability of the government and the army to strike back.

"To some extent, as far as we know, the Taliban's past planning has come true," said Atiqullah Amarkhail, a retired Afghan army general. "This declaration will throw the people into even more worry."

Sayed Salahuddin and Mohammad Sharif contributed to this report.

Taliban Warn Of Attacks In New Fighting Season

By Jim Michaels

[USA Today](#), April 12, 2016

WASHINGTON — The Afghan Taliban announced Tuesday the start of a new fighting season against the U.S.-backed government as the White House weighs future troop levels for the war-torn country.

In an email to the media, the Taliban warned it would launch "large scale attacks" but would attempt to avoid civilian casualties, according to the Associated Press.

The United States has nearly 10,000 servicemembers in Afghanistan. The White House is considering proposals to maintain a future military presence in the country after President Obama last year reversed a plan to remove all U.S. troops by 2016.

That reversal came as Afghan forces faced intense pressure from Taliban militants throughout the country. The Pentagon said no decisions have been made yet.

"Ultimately, Afghanistan has not achieved an enduring level of security and stability that justifies reduction in our support in 2016," Gen. John Campbell, who recently stepped down as the top coalition commander in Afghanistan, testified to Congress recently.

The Taliban traditionally fights in the warm months when snow in the mountains melts, and roads and trails become passable.

This fighting season is likely to be another significant test for Afghan security forces, which number about 350,000, including police and soldiers.

The Taliban have emerged strong in parts of the country, including Helmand province, a significant opium growing region in the south, challenging local police and Afghan army forces.

The militants said in the email that the spring offensive began at 5 a.m. local time. They dubbed the campaign "Operation Omari" in honor of Taliban founder Mullah Mohammad Omar, who died three years ago, according to the AP.

The Taliban added that in areas under their control, "mechanisms for good governance will be established so that our people can live a life of security and normalcy."

US And India Agree To Strengthen Military Ties

By Michael S. Schmidt

[New York Times](#), April 12, 2016

NEW DELHI — The United States and India on Tuesday agreed in principle to a series of initiatives between their militaries that the Obama administration hopes will strengthen American ties in the region as it seeks to counter China's growing influence.

Continuing recent steps to build closer collaboration between their militaries, the United States and India said they would allow their armed forces to share logistics abilities and enhance the exchange of defense technologies and other information.

The initiatives, announced by Ashton B. Carter, the defense secretary, and his Indian counterpart, Manohar Parrikar, at a news conference here, were a further demonstration of India's increased willingness to work with the United States on military and security issues.

For decades as a leader of the Non-Aligned Movement, India shied away from entering into strong alliances with other countries, particularly large world powers. But under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and wary of the growing power of its regional rival, China, the Indian government has moved closer to the United States.

The measures announced here, however, are largely symbolic. They provide India with few major military capabilities it does not already have. And they do not call for concrete actions like joint patrols in the South China Sea, which China has claimed as its own.

In a statement released after the news conference, Mr. Carter and Mr. Parrikar said they had "reaffirmed the importance of safeguarding maritime security and ensuring freedom of navigation and overflight throughout the region, including in the South China Sea."

The Obama administration has gone to great lengths to build a close relationship with India. Mr. Obama has visited the country twice, more than any president, and he and Mr. Modi seem to have built a close working relationship. Mr.

Carter has spent more time with the defense minister, Mr. Parrikar, than any other counterpart. And the United States ambassador to India, Richard R. Verma, has worked closely with Indian officials to find ways the countries can collaborate more where they have common interests.

"As we stand here, our two countries and our two militaries are closer than we have ever been — brought together by shared values, mutual interests and a promising destiny," Mr. Carter said.

He added: "The U.S.-India relationship is destined to be one of the defining partnerships of the 21st century. And that destiny is rapidly and surely becoming a reality."

The logistics agreement will allow the Indian and American militaries to use each other's bases to refuel and as staging areas during emergencies or natural disasters. The pact has not yet been signed, Mr. Carter said, adding that the signing would be in coming weeks after a final draft of the agreement is completed. Continue reading the main story

Declassified: Secretive North Korea Lifts Veil On Arms Program

By Jack Kim And David Brunnstrom

[Reuters](#), April 12, 2016

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

How China's Fishermen Are Fighting A Covert War In The South China Sea

By Simon Denyer

[Washington Post](#), April 12, 2016

TANMEN, China — In the disputed waters of the South China Sea, fishermen are the wild card.

China is using its vast fishing fleet as the advance guard to press its expansive territorial claims in the South China Sea, experts say. That is not only putting Beijing on a collision course with its Asian neighbors, but also introducing a degree of unpredictability that raises the risks of periodic crises.

In the past few weeks, tensions have flared with Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam as Chinese fishermen, often backed up by coast guard vessels, have ventured far from their homeland and close to other nations' coasts. They are just the latest conflicts in China's long-running battle to expand its fishing grounds and simultaneously exert its maritime dominance.

"The Chinese authorities consider fishermen and fishing vessels important tools in expanding China's presence and the country's claims in the disputed waters," said Zhang Hongzhou, an expert at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies at Singapore's Nanyang Technological University.

"Fishermen are increasingly at the front line of the South China Sea disputes," Zhang said, "and fishing incidents could trigger even bigger diplomatic and security tensions between China and regional countries."

Here, in the fishing port of Tanmen in the southern island of Hainan, 50-year-old captain Chen Yuguo was in the wheelhouse of his trawler last week, carrying out minor repairs after a six-week fishing trip to the disputed Spratly Islands.

A portrait of "Comrade" Mao Zedong hung in a place of honor behind him, alongside an expensive satellite navigation system supplied by the Chinese government. Chen said catches are much better in the Spratlys than in China's depleted inshore waters, but the captain said he is also fulfilling his patriotic duty.

"It is our water," he said, "but if we don't fish there, how can we claim it is our territory?"

Experts say the battle for fisheries resources, an often overlooked destabilizing influence in the South China Sea, is a source of unpredictability, volatility and risk.

At the end of March, Malaysia's maritime authorities spotted about 100 Chinese fishing boats, accompanied by a Chinese coast guard vessel, in its waters. They were close to Luconia Shoals, less than 100 nautical miles from Malaysian Borneo but 800 nautical miles from China's southern island of Hainan.

Early this month, Vietnam seized a Chinese ship that it said was supplying fuel to Chinese fishing boats in its waters.

The biggest flare-up came on March 20, when Indonesian officials boarded a Chinese fishing vessel close to Indonesia's Natuna Islands. As an Indonesian vessel began towing the boat to shore, a Chinese coast guard ship intervened to ram the fishing boat, pushing it back into the South China Sea — until the Indonesians released the tow line.

Indonesia sets great store in its friendly relations with China, but its government responded angrily, saying it felt that its efforts to maintain peace in the disputed waters had been "sabotaged." Defense officials vowed to send bigger naval vessels to defend its patrol boats in the region, to consider introducing military conscription to remote islands in the archipelago, and even to deploy U.S.-made F-16 fighter jets to the Natunas to ward off "thieves."

China claims 90 percent of the South China Sea, drawing a "nine-dash line" around its claims that passes close to the shores of the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, Vietnam — and the Natunas.

The fishing vessel, Beijing's Foreign Ministry said, was operating in China's "traditional fishing grounds," though the incident occurred just a few nautical miles from the Natunas and around 900 nautical miles from Hainan.

China's claim to the South China Sea is based partly on the idea that its fishermen have worked there for centuries.

But China is also trying to create facts on the ground by expanding its fishing industry's zone of operations, experts say.

After the fishing boats clear the way, coast guards are next, often followed by land reclamation on rocks and reefs and finally militarization and control, said Alan Dupont, professor of international security at the University of New South Wales in Sydney.

"I call the strategy 'fish, protect, occupy and control,' " he said.

China blames the United States for militarizing the South China Sea, citing President Obama's strategic rebalance to Asia, a recent deal to post U.S. conventional forces on five military bases in the Philippines for the first time in decades, and ongoing military exercises between the two countries.

But China, Dupont said, is pursuing its own strategic plan to dominate the Western Pacific and push the United States out, trying to take advantage of an Obama administration it believes to be distracted by other global crises. But Beijing's "opportunistic" policy is already backfiring, he said, uniting many countries in the region against China.

But it is not just about nationalism. Economics is a major driving force for the expansion, Zhang and Dupont say — to satisfy China's ever-growing appetite for fish and its profitable and rapidly expanding fish export industry, already the world's largest.

China's per capita fish consumption was estimated by the Food and Agriculture Organization at nearly 80 pounds in 2010, nearly double the global average, and is growing by roughly 8 percent a year. The fish industry employs nearly 15 million people.

Compared with inshore waters, the Spratlys are much richer grounds, fishermen say, with valuable giant clams, corals and lobsters to be harvested — although competition is growing as more boats arrive.

The government is also pushing the fishermen further from shore. It provides fuel subsidies, with higher rates for bigger boats and journeys to the Spratlys. The Hainan government heavily subsidizes the construction of larger, steel-hulled trawlers, and an expensive satellite system was provided virtually free of charge to about 50,000 vessels.

With it, Chinese fishing crews can send emergency signals to coast guard ships with their exact location if they run into trouble.

Fishermen said the government often organizes trips to the Spratlys, with coast guard vessels in attendance, especially when tensions are high.

"When our country needs us, we will go without a second thought to defend our rights," Chen said.

Rodger Baker, the lead Asia-Pacific analyst for the global intelligence firm Stratfor, said these maritime "rights protection" voyages are China's version of the U.S. Navy's

freedom-of-navigation exercises in the South China Sea. They are, he said, designed to underline China's possession of "its waters."

Embedded within the fishing communities and often organizing these trips are what China calls its "maritime militia" — civilians trained in small-arms use whose job it is to help defend the country's maritime claims.

The Tanmen Maritime Militia is the most celebrated of the groups. It was honored with a visit from Chinese President Xi Jinping in April 2013, just after he took office.

Its members played a leading role in encouraging fishermen to travel to the Spratlys as far back as 1985. Their repeated trips to Scarborough Shoal culminated in a standoff with the Philippines in 2012 that ultimately saw China seize control of the submerged coral feature, and they sparred with their Vietnamese counterparts in 2014 when China towed an oil rig into disputed waters.

Their fishing boats also helped deliver construction materials for China's land reclamation and construction program in the Spratlys. Last October, when the USS Lassen conducted a freedom-of-navigation operation near Subi Reef, the Chinese navy kept a respectful distance, but smaller merchant or fishing vessels came much closer and even crossed the destroyer's bow, Defense News reported. Experts say those boats were probably manned by militia members.

Andrew S. Erickson, at the U.S. Navy War College's China Maritime Studies Institute, calls them China's "little blue men," comparing them to Russia's "little green men," the armed men in unmarked uniforms who played a leading role in the takeover of Crimea from Ukraine.

As well as giving Beijing a degree of deniability, their quasi-civilian status also complicates the rules of engagement for U.S. naval vessels.

But if China is pulling many of the strings through its maritime militia, no country in the region has full control of its fishing fleets, with captains quite capable of exploiting nationalist sentiments to expand their fishing grounds.

"There is a big risk for China in this policy," Stratfor's Baker said. "Fishing boats will go where the fish, clams and crabs are."

"As you urge them on with assertions of rights, nationalism and claims, fishing captains know they can take greater risks, because they know they are going to be bailed out. So they know they can push the limits fairly strongly."

That, he said, means that more crises in the disputed waters are almost inevitable.

Xu Yangjingjing and Xu Jing contributed to this report.

China's New Security Challenge: Angry Mom-and-Pop Investors

As small investors watch their nest eggs dwindle, some hit the streets in protest

By Chuin-Wei Yap

[Wall Street Journal](#), April 12, 2016

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

U.S. Reviewing Sinai Peacekeeper Mission, May Automate Jobs

By Phil Stewart

[Reuters](#), April 12, 2016

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

US Reviewing Scale Of Its Peacekeeping Mission In Sinai

By Robert Burns

[Associated Press](#), April 12, 2016

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Pentagon is considering ways it could automate aspects of its peacekeeping mission in the Sinai Peninsula, possibly reducing the number of troops deployed to an area struggling with the rise of an Islamic State group faction, officials said Tuesday.

Navy Capt. Jeff Davis, a Pentagon spokesman, said Defense Secretary Ash Carter recently notified officials in Israel and Egypt that the U.S. is reviewing its role in the Multinational Force and Observers, or MFO, which monitors compliance with the 1979 Egypt-Israel peace treaty. Davis said the U.S. has about 700 troops there.

Davis said the U.S. has signaled its desire to discuss the mission with Egypt and Israel but is not considering withdrawing entirely. He said the mission has changed very little over the decades, even as new military technologies have come into use that could automate some aspects.

Mark Toner, a State Department spokesman, called the U.S. review "part of an ongoing effort ... to look at how to modernize" the observer mission by using technology or improving efficiency.

"Whether and how significant a force reduction that will entail I can't speak to at this point in time," Toner said. But he added: "In no way does it speak to a lessening in our commitment to the objective of the MFO mission."

Last year, the U.S. strengthened its presence in the Sinai with dozens of additional troops and support equipment to improve protection for the force after a roadside bomb attack that wounded four U.S. soldiers.

Sinai has been plagued for years by an insurgency that escalated after the 2013 military overthrow of Egypt's Islamist President Mohammed Morsi amid mass protests against him. A Sinai-based IS affiliate has targeted Egyptian troops in

Sinai and claimed responsibility for the Oct. 31 downing of a Russian airliner that killed 224 people.

Associated Press Diplomatic Writer Matthew Lee contributed to this report.

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Azerbaijan Envoy Says U.S. Help Needed To Avert Regional Security Meltdown

By Guy Taylor

[Washington Times](#), April 12, 2016

Azerbaijan's top diplomat in Washington said the U.S. must do more to deal with rising instability in his region, lest tensions that have already drawn in both Turkey and Russia spiral into more violence like the clashes that rocked the Nagorno-Karabakh region earlier this month.

While Ambassador Elin Suleymanov said that he's not certain the flare-up between Russia-backed Armenia and Turkey-backed Azerbaijan was directly sparked by the ongoing Ankara-Moscow rift, he believes it "showed how dangerous things can be if they get out of control."

The worst outbreak in fighting in more than 20 years in Nagorno-Karabakh, an ethnic Armenian enclave inside Azerbaijan, killed dozens of soldiers and sent nerves on edge from Europe to Washington, where concerns skyrocketed over the prospect of a Turkey-Russia proxy war.

In a wide-ranging interview this week, Mr. Suleymanov told *The Washington Times* that the Obama administration has recently shown signs of engaging more deeply with Azerbaijan and toward counterbalancing growing Russian influence in the region as a whole.

But he stressed that far more U.S. attention will be needed to prevent a wider regional security meltdown — and suggested the Obama administration missed a rare chance to exert real influence between Turkey, Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan following the early-April clash.

Mr. Suleymanov said it was Russian President Vladimir Putin — not President Obama — who has exploited the situation, portraying himself as the peacemaker and summoning Armenian and Azeri military officials to Moscow to restore a cease-fire over Nagorno-Karabakh.

"It is obvious today that Russia's profile as a major diplomatic power in the region has risen significantly over the last two weeks," the ambassador said. "Russia is a very decisive player. We've seen it. And over the last two weeks, we've seen Russia being even more engaged than before."

Matthew Bryza, a pointman on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict under both President George W. Bush and Mr. Obama, and the U.S. ambassador to Azerbaijan from 2010 to

2011, made much the same point about the price of U.S. passivity in an op-ed for *The Washington Post* Tuesday.

Mr. Putin, he wrote, "is exploiting the situation through intensive diplomacy that Obama shows no interest in matching. The White House has failed even to issue an official statement."

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has for decades been a bone of contention between Moscow and Ankara.

The separatist enclave inside Azerbaijan has been under the control of Armenia's military and local ethnic Armenians since the two countries waged a war over the territory that claimed some 30,000 lives following the breakup of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s.

The conflict has been frozen since 1994, when both sides agreed to a cease-fire that was originally co-chaired by the U.S., France and Russia via the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Despite the cease-fire, the two sides have never signed a comprehensive peace deal.

During the years since, Turkey, which already had tense relations with Armenia over charges that Turks engaged in a genocide against Armenians in World War I, has sided with Azerbaijan, imposing a trade embargo on Armenia.

Playing both sides

Russia has sought to exert influence with both sides by providing weapons to both the Armenians and the Azerbaijanis.

A key difference in the weapons deals, according to Mr. Suleymanov, is that energy-rich Azerbaijan "actually pays" Moscow for military equipment while Armenia accepts it as aid from the Russians.

Indeed, Azerbaijan often has annual military expenditures in excess of Armenia's entire state budget and, over the years, has threatened to seize Nagorno-Karabakh by force if peace negotiations remained stalled.

But the ambassador blamed Armenia for starting the violence in early April, suggesting that Yerevan had sought to provoke the clash in the wake of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev's trip to Washington late last month.

"Every time there is a move forward, Armenia tries to undermine it," Mr. Suleymanov said.

The ambassador's comments come as speculation also swirls over the extent to which Russia's growing military footprint in Armenia, which shares a 165-mile border and a contentious history with Turkey, might have contributed to the recent clash.

Moscow quietly signed an air defense agreement with Armenia in December and has since deployed at least four new MiG-29 fighter jets and a host of other military vehicles to a Russian base just outside the Armenian capital of Yerevan.

Regional analysts say Mr. Putin is looking to squeeze Turkey in response to last November's shooting down of a

Russian fighter jet that had veered into Turkish airspace from Syria.

Mr. Suleymanov rejected charges that Moscow deliberately provoked the crisis to punish Ankara and warn outside powers.

"Russia several times insisted, and stated very clearly, both from President Putin and from Prime Minister Medvedev, that they are the most interested party in keeping peace and stability in the region," he said. "We take them at their word."

However, he added that concerns are high among Azerbaijani officials that the recent clash will "add to the tension which already exists between Russia and Turkey."

"A potential escalation and widening of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan does not help that situation," he said.

The relatively warm welcome President Aliyev received on his recent Washington trip — officially made to attend Mr. Obama's nuclear security summit — came just days before the outbreak of violence in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The ambassador said Mr. Aliyev's visit "felt like a bilateral" meeting because the Azerbaijani president got a brief one-on-one with Mr. Obama and had extensive meetings with Vice President Joseph R. Biden, Secretary of State John F. Kerry and Commerce Secretary Penny Pritzker.

The Aliyev government, he said, was particularly "grateful because both Biden and Kerry expressed their support for the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan."

But the ambassador added Azerbaijani officials have "for a long time called for a more engaged U.S. policy in the region" and "honestly, we haven't seen it until very recently."

"If the U.S. engages in that peacemaking effort, along with Russia, that would be good," he said. "For peace to hold and to last, I think what we want to have is a stronger engagement from all the players, including the United States and France."

A resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh stalemate, he added, could unlock other frozen conflicts dating to the break-up of the Soviet Union, from Georgia and Moldova to "perhaps even Ukraine, because all of them originate from the same patterning of undermining territorial integrity, and I think that's the underlining factor here."

NATIONAL NEWS

On Equal Pay Day, Obama Says Female President Is Closer Than Ever

By Gregory Korte

[USA Today](#), April 12, 2016

WASHINGTON — President Obama said Tuesday that the United States is getting closer to a woman president,

even as he argued that too many women are paid less than men for doing the same work.

Dedicating a new national monument dedicated to women's history in Washington, Obama said future generations would "be astonished that there was ever a time when women were vastly outnumbered in the boardroom or in Congress, that there was ever a time when a woman had never sat in the Oval Office."

"I don't know how long it will take to get there, but I know we're getting closer to that day," he said.

White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest said the statement was not intended to serve as an endorsement of his former Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, "I think the president has believed for some time that America has been ready for a female president," he said.

Obama took his motorcade two miles from the White House to a historic house on Capitol Hill Tuesday, with two purposes in mind: Dedication of a new national monument to women's history, and highlighting the continuing pay gap between men and women.

The Sewall-Belmont House, which will now be known as the Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument, is where the National Woman's Party had its headquarters from 1929 until it dissolved in 1997. It was there that suffragists Alva Belmont and Alice Paul led the movement for women's rights — drafting the proposed Equal Rights Amendment, lobbying for the Civil Rights Act and promoting women's equality in the United Nations Charter.

Under the 1906 Antiquities Act, the president can designate national monuments and protect them from being sold or developed. Obama has been particularly aggressive in his use of the law, but he chose Tuesday to invoke it again on the day he had proclaimed as a day to bring attention to paycheck fairness.

"It should be noted that today is Equal Pay Day, which means a woman has to work about this far into 2016 just to earn what a man earned in 2015," he said "If you don't believe we're going to close the wage gap, you need to come to this house, because this house has a story to tell."

Obama touted some executive action he's taken to ensure paycheck fairness, including a rule allowing the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to require companies to submit salary data. He called on Congress to go even further to protect employees from retaliation if they discuss their paychecks in the workplace.

Obama spoke to a mostly female audience at the house Tuesday, including Sen. Barbara Mikulski, D-Md., Interior Secretary Sally Jewell, and tennis great Billie Jean King.

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Not An Endorsement, But Close; Obama Comments Hint At Support For Clinton

By Jeff Mason

[Reuters](#), April 12, 2016

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Obama: I Want People To Be ‘Astonished’ There Had Not Been A Woman President

By Nick Gass

[Politico](#), April 12, 2016

In his speech Tuesday commemorating the designation of a new national monument honoring women’s equality, President Barack Obama said he looked forward to the day when future visitors to the Washington, D.C., site would be “astonished” that at one point in time, a woman had never been president.

“I want young girls and boys to come here 10, 20, 100 years from now to know that women fought for equality, it was not just given to them. I want them to come here and be astonished there was ever a time when women could not vote,” Obama said during his remarks at the Belmont-Paul Women’s Equality National Monument, which served as the headquarters of the National Woman’s Party since 1929. “I want them to be astonished that there was ever a time when women earned less than men for doing the same work.”

Obama, speaking on Equal Pay Day at the site now known as the Sewall-Belmont House, then spoke of the increasing role of women in business and in government.

“I want them to be astonished that there was ever a time when women were vastly outnumbered in the boardroom or in Congress, that there was ever a time when a woman had never sat in the Oval Office,” he remarked.

The comments from Obama follow an interview that Vice President Joe Biden gave with Mic that published Monday, in which he said, “We’re gonna be able to elect a woman in this country. I would like to see a woman elected.”

Staff members could then be heard telling the interviewer the time was up for the interview, though the vice president’s office later said that had nothing to do with the substance of the question but rather with Biden’s schedule.

Neither Obama nor Biden have endorsed a candidate in the Democratic primary between Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders.

Obama Envisions A Day When Female Presidents Are Common

By Jordan Fabian

[The Hill](#), April 12, 2016

President Obama said Tuesday that people will someday be amazed a woman had not served as president for so long in comments that came close to publicly backing Democratic front-runner Hillary Clinton.

“I want young girls and boys to come here 10, 20, 100 years from now to know that women fought for equality,” he said at the Sewall-Belmont House and Museum in Washington. Obama designated the Capitol Hill site as a national monument to honor the women’s rights movement.

“I want them to be astonished there was ever a time when women were vastly outnumbered in the boardroom or in Congress, that there was ever a time when a woman had never sat in the Oval Office.”

Without mentioning the current presidential race, Obama said he does not know how long it will take for a woman to be elected. “But I know we are getting closer to that day because of the work of generations of active, committed citizens.”

Since 1929, the Sewall-Belmont House has been the headquarters of the National Woman’s Party, established in the early 1900s to fight for equal rights for women.

The president made the remark a day after Vice President Biden spoke about the importance of electing a female president.

“This country is ready for a woman. There’s no problem, we’re going to be able to elect a woman in this country,” Biden said in an interview with news website Mic. “I would like to see a woman elected.”

Obama and Biden are officially neutral in the hotly contested Democratic presidential primary between Clinton and Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), and aides made an effort to show they’re not tipping the scales in favor of Clinton.

White House press secretary Josh Earnest said Obama was making a “values statement” and not a comment on a specific candidate in his speech Tuesday.

“I think the president indicated in his remarks that the country is ready for that,” Earnest said when asked if Obama is ready for a female president. “But the candidates are going to be evaluated on their values and their priorities and their agenda.”

Still, the president has defended his former secretary of State on several occasions against attacks from Sanders. Obama has also dismissed concerns about her perceived weaknesses, including an FBI investigation into her use of a personal email server during her time at the State Department.

The president’s remarks on Tuesday coincided with Equal Pay Day.

He also seemed to allude to the controversy surrounding the pay gap between the men’s and women’s U.S. national soccer teams.

Several members of the women’s team have filed a complaint with the Equal Opportunity Employment Commission, saying they are paid far less than their male counterparts.

“Equal pay for equal work should be a fundamental principle for our economy,” Obama said. “It’s the idea that

whether you are a high school teacher, a business executive, or a professional soccer player or tennis player, your work should be equally valued and rewarded, whether you are a man or a woman.”

— This story was updated at 1:15 p.m.

Obama To Designate A National Monument In D.C. To Honor Women’s Equality Tuesday

By Juliet Eilperin

[Washington Post](#), April 11, 2016

President Obama will pay homage to women’s equality Tuesday, designating the Sewall-Belmont House and Museum, a historic house in the District that has housed the National Woman’s Party since 1929, as a national monument.

The site, to be named the Belmont-Paul Women’s Equality National Monument, honors both Alva Belmont, the National Woman’s Party benefactor, and Alice Paul, who founded the party and served as its chief strategist. Obama will deliver remarks at the house, which served as the party’s fifth headquarters and is on Capitol Hill, on Equal Pay Day, an annual commemoration that aims to highlight economic disparities between men and women. The date marks how many extra days a woman would have to work to make as much as a typical man would have made in the previous calendar year.

“The Belmont-Paul Women’s Equality National Monument will honor and forever remind us of the risk, the work and the dedication of those who gathered in this house to fight for women’s equality,” Interior Secretary Sally Jewell said in a statement. “We must never forget their hard-fought struggle for the right to vote and equal rights for women under the law.”

“The timing could not be more symbolic as we mark National Equal Pay Day, an important reminder that women are still fighting for equality today,” Jewell added.

Located just yards away from the grounds of the U.S. Capitol and Supreme Court, the site will be managed by the National Parks Service.

The National Woman’s Party became an educational organization in 1997 and continues to educate the public on the issues of gender equality. The house contains the most complete collection of women’s suffrage and equal rights movement documents and artifacts in America, according to the National Parks Conservation Association.

Selecting a woman’s history site as his latest monument — Obama has now designated nearly two dozen of them, encompassing more than 265 million acres of U.S. lands and waters — reflects the administration’s effort to single out aspects of the country’s past that speak to different parts of American society. Past monuments have paid tribute

to cultural hallmarks in African American, Native American, Asian American and Latino history.

The monument will be the ninth national park site that specifically commemorates women’s history. The only other national monument recognizing a female pioneer is the one Obama designated in 2013, the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Monument in Maryland.

“Women’s history is America’s history,” Page Harrington, executive director for the Sewall-Belmont House & Museum, said in a statement.

Rhea Suh, president of the Natural Resources Defense Council, said the declaration not only “expands America’s story” but “will protect this site from intrusive development and other harms in the future.”

The president has also made equal pay for women a major policy platform while in office, making it easier for women to sue for pay discrimination by signing the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act and issuing executive orders prohibiting federal contractors from discriminating against employers who discuss or inquire about their compensation.

The stately red-brick home, which now hosts receptions as well as panel discussions and other events, served as a gathering place to lobby for women’s political, cultural and economic rights. During its heyday, the party targeted lawmakers and presidents through a range of nonviolent means including marches, hunger strikes and speaking tours.

On Jan. 4, 1931, less than two years after the party moved in, Belmont declared, “May it stand for years and years to come, telling of the work that the women of the United States have accomplished; the example we have given foreign nations; and our determination that they shall be — as ourselves — free citizens, recognized as the equals of men.”

An effort has been underway since the early 1970s to protect the building, and the National Park Foundation will announce Tuesday that D.C. businessman David Rubenstein will contribute \$1 million to support the site and its restoration needs.

Google also announced Monday that it is creating Expedition, a virtual tour of the monument, to enable schools across the country to view the historic landmark.

Obama Recognizes Equal Pay Day With Call To Close The Pay Gap

By Ashley Alman

[Huffington Post](#), April 12, 2016

President Barack Obama issued a presidential proclamation Monday marking April 12, 2016, as National Equal Pay Day.

Each year, Americans assert their commitment to achieving equal pay for equal work on Equal Pay Day, a date determined based on how far into the year women would

have to work to earn the same pay men earned in the previous year.

Obama reaffirmed the administration's commitment to closing the gender pay gap in his proclamation, calling for continued action to address issues that affect women in the workforce, like the pay gap, unconscious bias and pregnancy discrimination.

"The gender pay gap in the United States is among the largest of many industrialized nations, and because women make up nearly half our workforce, this disparity impacts us all," the president wrote. "The pay gap between men and women offends our values as Americans, and as long as it exists, our businesses, our communities, and our Nation will suffer the consequences."

The pay gap affects women of color even more. Obama noted that black women earn 60 cents to each dollar earned by a white man, while the typical Hispanic woman earns 55 cents to the dollar.

"Women are increasingly the breadwinners of American households, and when they are not paid equally, or are underrepresented in certain higher-paying occupations, their ability to save for retirement is hindered and hardworking families face greater difficulty meeting their basic financial needs," the president wrote.

Obama also established the Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument in Washington, D.C., on Tuesday. The Sewall-Belmont House has been headquarters for the National Woman's Party since 1929.

Read the full presidential proclamation [here](#).

House With Long Activist History Is Now Monument To Equality

By Julie Hirschfeld Davis

[New York Times](#), April 12, 2016

WASHINGTON — The red-brick house on Capitol Hill served for decades as a national headquarters and dormitory for the so-called iron-jawed ladies lobbying for equal rights, even as male members of Congress sought to raze it to make room for offices for themselves.

British soldiers set it on fire during the War of 1812 to squelch American resistance, and generations of Washington brides and grooms have held their wedding receptions in its historic halls.

On Tuesday, President Obama designated the Sewall-Belmont House and Museum as a national monument for women's equality, declaring the three-story structure a symbol of the American fight for civil rights at a time when the country could be on the cusp of electing its first female president.

"This house became a hotbed of activism, a centerpiece for the struggle for equality, a monument to fight not just for women's equality, but ultimately for equality for

everybody," Mr. Obama said. He proclaimed it a monument, he said, "to help tell the story of these suffragists."

Mr. Obama added, "In these rooms, they pursued ideals which shouldn't be relegated to the archives of history, shouldn't be behind glass cases."

It was an unusual use of the president's executive powers under the Antiquities Act to preserve an aspect of women's history. The house, which will now be known as the Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument, recognizes two pioneers of the women's rights struggle in the United States: Alva Belmont, a wealthy socialite who used money from her divorce to finance the National Women's Party as it pressed for and won voting rights for women in 1920, and Alice Paul, who founded the party and led that effort.

"I want young girls and boys to come here, 10, 20, 100 years from now, to know that women fought for equality, it was not just given to them," President Obama said, adding that he wanted future generations to be "astonished" to learn "that there was ever a time when a woman had never sat in the Oval Office."

Left out of the name of the monument was Robert Sewall, who built the house around 1800 and then rebuilt it in 1820, after the British burned it to the ground in 1814 because it housed Americans resisting the invasion of Washington.

But the house's name will remain the same. "It will always be the Sewall-Belmont House — that will never go away, and we don't want to get rid of that history," said L. Page Harrington, the executive director of the Sewall-Belmont House and Museum. "But if you're talking about a women's history monument, you want to pick women to name it for."

Mr. Obama, who has made the push for equal pay a priority, announced the new monument on Equal Pay Day, an annual observance marking how many additional days a woman would have to work to earn the same amount a man did the year before.

"I'm here to say we will close the wage gap," Mr. Obama said. "And if you don't believe that we're going to close our wage gap, you need to come visit this house because this house has a story to tell."

That story was very nearly lost to history.

Ms. Paul moved into the house in 1929, as the party began a push for women's rights legislation and an equal rights amendment. She lived and worked there until the mid-1970s and hosted a continually rotating cast of women who traveled to Washington to press their cause.

"Women would come here to the headquarters and they would learn how to politically engage, but they needed a safe place to stay and they needed to be able to have chaperones with them," Ms. Harrington said. "The women that lived and worked here were extremely dedicated."

Ms. Harrington said the house itself had been integral to the push for women's rights because of its proximity to the Capitol, where Ms. Paul led lobbying efforts on hundreds of pieces of legislation and succeeded in winning passage of as many as 300.

"She developed lobbying strategies that were unheard-of at the time," said Kristen Brengel, the vice president for government affairs at the National Parks Conservation Association. "When you walk in the house, you can read all of her index cards from when she lobbied members of Congress, and then she'd call their wives and get their wives on board."

Even as she fought for women's rights, Ms. Paul had to fend off efforts to encroach on her prime real estate. In 1968, a group of congressmen drafted legislation to confiscate the house to make room for a driveway for a new Senate office building. They were unsuccessful. A similar effort surfaced in the 1970s, when Ms. Paul enlisted the help of Patricia Schroeder, then a Democratic representative from Colorado, to fight efforts to tear down the house to make way for the Hart Senate Office Building.

"The guys were building the Hart building, and they were going to tear this thing down because it was insignificant and in their way," Senator Barbara A. Mikulski, Democrat of Maryland and the chamber's longest-serving woman, said in an interview. "I joined with other women of the House at that time — 15 or 16 — and said, 'We're not going to tear down women's history so 50 guys can have offices.'"

Last year, Ms. Mikulski drafted legislation to designate the house as a National Park Service site and wrote to Mr. Obama asking that he use his presidential power to proclaim it a monument.

"There are a lot of monuments around here in Washington, and we thought that there ought to be a national monument to women — to our struggle and our success," she said.

Since the 1990s, as the membership of the National Women's Party dwindled and other women's groups attracted more attention and money, the aging house struggled. It survived in part through event rentals, including many wedding receptions, bringing in about \$100,000 at its high point in 2007, Ms. Harrington said.

But a mold outbreak in the library in 2014 cost \$75,000 to fix, forcing her to switch two full-time staff people to a half-time schedule to cover the cost. Heavy snowfalls in January and February ripped off the copper gutters. Repairs ate up Ms. Harrington's budget for Women's History Month programs last month.

The monument designation means that the National Park Service will now perform such maintenance, and the museum can continue to operate. The weddings, Ms. Harrington said, are a thing of the past.

Obama Designates National Monument Named For N.J. Suffragette Alice Paul

[New Jersey Local News](#), April 12, 2016

President Barack Obama on Tuesday designated the newest national monument, a house near the U.S. Capitol where Alice Paul of Mount Laurel and other suffragettes fought for equal rights for women.

The Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument occupies the house that has been home to National Woman's Party since 1929. It is named for Alva Belmont, a former party president and benefactor, and Paul, the party's founder and its chief strategist.

Obama called Paul "a brilliant community organizer and political strategist, and she recruited women and men from across the country to join their cause."

Menendez: Give Alice Paul a medal

The president made the announcement on Equal Pay Day, which marks how much longer into the new year an average woman needs to work in order to make the same salary as an average man did in 12 months.

"On the day that symbolizes how far we need to go in order for women to have the equality in the workplace they rightly deserve, it is fitting that we honor New Jersey's Alice Paul, who fought her entire life for women's rights and gender equality, and that we recognize the responsibility we share to finally complete her life's mission," said U.S. Sen. Robert Menendez (D-N.J.).

Obama said women's rights protestors picketed in front of the White House daily to demand the ballot, even as they were mocked, arrested and beaten. After winning approval of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, those who lived at that house fought for civil rights protections for women and campaigned for women running for Congress.

"This house became a hotbed of activism, a centerpiece for the struggle for equality, a monument to fight not just for women's equality, but ultimately, for equality for everybody," Obama said. "I'm hoping that a young generation will come here and draw inspiration from the efforts of people who came before them."

Paul was the original author of what would become the proposed Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution, which failed to get the necessary support among the states. She died in 1977, but her work lives on through the nonprofit Alice Paul Institute in Mount Laurel.

Menendez and Rep. Tom MacArthur (R-3rd Dist.) have introduced legislation to give Paul the Congressional Gold Medal. U.S. Sen. Cory Booker (D-N.J.) and Reps. Frank Pallone Jr. (D-6th Dist.), Leonard Lance (R-7th Dist.), Bill Pascrell Jr. (D-9th Dist.), Donald Payne Jr. (D-10th Dist.) and Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-11th Dist.) are co-sponsors.

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White House Honors Alice Paul's Washington Headquarters

By Jan Hefler

[Philly \(PA\)](#), April 12, 2016

President Obama designated the former headquarters of the National Women's Party, which was founded by Mount Laurel native Alice Paul in 1917, as a national monument on Tuesday.

The three-story brick house in Washington, D.C., will be renamed the Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument in honor of Paul and Alva Belmont, a suffragist and benefactor whose donations helped the party purchase the building in 1929.

Obama took the action on "Equal Pay Day," which marks the length of time women must work into the new year to make the same amount that men made in the previous year.

Obama said the monument commemorates the spot "where some of our country's most important history took place . . . This house has a story to tell, a story of the National Woman's Party whose members fought to have women's voices heard." The suffragists, he said, "were mocked, they were derided, arrested, beaten, there were force feedings during hunger strikes and through all of this they kept protesting for suffrage."

Lucienne Beard, executive director of the Alice Paul Institute in Mount Laurel, Paul's birthplace, said she was thrilled at the designation. "Alice Paul is really an untold story in American history and to suddenly hear the president and others talking about her like she's someone everyone knows about was really exciting," she said.

Though Paul had organized thousands of women to picket daily in front of the White House to win women the right to vote, she is less known than Susan B. Anthony, Lucretia Mott and other suffragists who had launched the movement years earlier.

"Alice's dedication to advancing the rights of women lasted a good part of her life," said Barbara Irvine, a founder of the Alice Paul Institute. "After suffrage was won in 1920, she went on to essentially write the Equal Rights Amendment and worked to get it passed until her death in 1977."

Paul's homestead, on Hooton Road, is on the federal registry of historic places.

The designation of the former party headquarters will "permanently protect one of the oldest standing houses near the U.S. Capitol and help preserve an extensive archival collection that documents the history, strategies, tactics, and accomplishments of the movement to secure women's

suffrage and equal rights in the United States and around the globe," according to a White House release.

It was a place where women gathered and "worked tirelessly to draft petitions, organize protests, write letters, and provide each other with both the physical and emotional support necessary to sustain each other's intense commitment," the release said.

Paul, who was raised in a Quaker family, became interested in women's equality as a student who had traveled to London with the hope of attending college. She didn't get the scholarship she had expected and became interested in the Suffragette movement. After learning their attention-grabbing tactics, she returned to the United States and she became a leader of the movement. After she was arrested for obstructing traffic during a march, she organized a hunger strike, and it sparked public sympathy and helped win the passage of the 19th Amendment.

Paul, an attorney, later drafted the text for the Equal Rights Amendment and wrote provisions that were incorporated in the Civil Rights Act to prevent discrimination on the basis of gender. She also worked to amend the U.N. Charter to include provisions for women's equality.

In 1920, Paul said: "It is incredible to me that any woman should consider the fight for full equality won. It has just begun. There is hardly a field, economic or political, in which the natural and unaccustomed policy is not to ignore women . . . Unless women are prepared to fight politically they must be content to be ignored politically."

Today, the National Woman's Party is an organization that educates the public about the history of the movement and continues to work to win passage of the Equal Rights Amendment.

Efforts to preserve the former headquarters, which was more recently known as the Sewall-Belmont House and Museum, began the early 1970s.

The National Parks Service announced that businessman and philanthropist David M. Rubenstein, the co-founder of The Carlyle Group in Washington, D.C., contributed \$1 million to repair and restore the building. Google also announced that it will create an Expedition, a virtual tour of the monument, to enable schools to tour the landmark.

Obama Uses Monument Dedication To Push For A Woman In The Oval Office

[The Blaze](#), April 12, 2016

It was far from an endorsement, but President Barack Obama made sure to make mention of the idea of a woman president during remarks dedicating a monument to women suffragist.

"I want them to be astonished that there was a time when women were outnumbered in the boardroom or

Congress or that a woman had never sat in the oval office,” Obama said regarding children in later generations.

President Barack Obama speaks at the newly designated Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument in Washington, D.C., Tuesday. (Saul Loeb/AFP/Getty Images)

The remark comes as Obama's former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is running for the Democratic presidential nomination.

Obama on Tuesday declared the Sewall-Belmont House, the headquarters of the National Woman's Party, the

Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument. The monument honors suffragist Alva Belmont and Alice Paul, founder of the National Women's Party.

Obama mentioned the Oval Office in the context of future generations visiting the newly declared monument.

“I want young girls and boys to come here, 10, 20, 100 years from now to know women fought for equality, it was not just given to them,” Obama said. “I want them to come here and be astonished that there was ever a time when women couldn't vote. I want them to be astonished that there was ever a time when women earned less than men for doing the same work.”

Obama called on Congress to pass the “Paycheck Fairness Act” to increase the ability to women to sue for gender pay discrimination. But he also said that America is a “work in progress” always improving.

“I'm not here just to say we should close the wage gap. I'm here to say we will close the wage gap,” Obama said.

Obama Dedicates Monument To Women's Equality

By Katie Reilly

[TIME](#), April 12, 2016

President Barack Obama on Tuesday dedicated a national monument on Capitol Hill in honor of the people who have fought for women's rights, calling the building a “centerpiece for the struggle for equality.”

Obama's remarks at the historic Sewall-Belmont House and Museum—which will now be called the Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument—came on Equal Pay Day, which recognizes the wage gap that persists between men and women in the work force.

“I want young girls and boys to come here, 10, 20, 100 years from now, to know that women fought for equality, it was not just given to them,” Obama said, the Washington Post reported. “I want them to be astonished that there was ever a time when women earned less than men for doing the same work. I want them to be astonished that there was ever a time when women were vastly outnumbered in the boardroom or in Congress, that there was ever a time when a woman had never sat in the Oval Office.”

Though he did not mention her directly, Obama's comments made subtle reference to the historic nature of Hillary Clinton's presidential candidacy. If elected, she would be the first female president of the United States.

The national monument has been home to the National Woman's Party since 1929 and is now named for Alva Belmont, the party's benefactor, and Alice Paul, the party's founder, the Post reported.

Obama has made equal pay a priority during his presidency, signing the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act to make it easier for employees to challenge their employers' discriminatory pay practices.

“If you don't believe that we're going to close our wage gap, you need to come visit this house, because this house has a story to tell,” Obama said.

Obama Inaugurates Monument To Women's Equality

[Voice of America](#), April 12, 2016

U.S. President Barack Obama designated a historic house in Washington as a monument honoring the movement for women's equality in the country.

“Today [April 12] is Equal Pay Day. Which means a woman has to work about this far into 2016 just to earn what a man earned in 2015,” Obama said in a speech at what is now called the Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument.

The name honors activist and suffragist Alva Belmont, a former president of the National Woman's Party that fought for equality, as well as party founder Alice Paul.

“What better place to commemorate this day than here at this house, where some of our country's most important history took place,” Obama said.

The Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument is located at what had been known as the Sewall-Belmont House, in the Capitol Hill neighborhood, in Washington, D.C.

The president acknowledged the hard work done by the women who fought for the right to vote, as well as some of those in attendance, such as former tennis star Billy Jean King and former Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi.

He cited figures on the wage gap in the U.S., stressing that “the gap is even wider for women of color.”

“We will close the wage gap”

“But I'm not here to say we should close the wage gap, we will close the wage gap,” Obama said, urging Congress to “pass the Paycheck Fairness Act to put sensible rules in place.”

The White House said the move Tuesday will help preserve an archive documenting the “history, strategies, tactics and other accomplishments” of the movement to

achieve voting and equal rights for women in the United States and elsewhere in the world.

President Barack Obama's limousine sits in front of the newly designated Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument, formerly known as the Sewall-Belmont House and Museum, in Washington, April 12, 2016.

The Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument is located at what had been known as the Sewall-Belmont House, which the National Woman's Party began using as its headquarters in 1929.

The main house there dates back to 1800 and sits next to a Senate office building and is one block from the U.S. Supreme Court.

Inside are items such as the desk of women's suffrage icon Susan B. Anthony and a banner used during the first protests demanding that women be allowed to vote.

Women finally earned that right in 1920 with the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

The DNC's Equal Pay Day Plan Turns Sour

By Dana Milbank

[Washington Post](#), April 12, 2016

When life gives you lemons, the saying goes, make lemonade.

And what if life gives Democrats lemonade? Well, they'll try to sell it to hurrying rush-hour commuters outside. On a cool morning. In a downpour.

The Democratic National Committee hatched a clever plan to draw attention Tuesday to Equal Pay Day, the annual reminder that women earn only 79 cents on average for every dollar men earn: They would sell lemonade on Capitol Hill and charge men \$1 a cup but women only 79 cents.

But there were a few holes in the business plan — beyond the reality that men and women alike do not typically enjoy lemonade, at any price, early on a chilly and rainy morning.

The Democrats, further, did not have a permit to sell, which meant they had to give the stuff away for a "suggested donation." Nor were they aware that they would be competing with a charity selling Krispy Kreme doughnuts on the very same spot. They also, apparently, didn't have authorization to set up their stand, which caused the station manager to call the transit police.

Over an hour, the 10 women from the DNC approached a couple thousand commuters at the Capitol South Metro station and "sold" all of 20 cups — perhaps inadvertently confirming the oft-leveled charge by Republicans that Democrats wouldn't even know how to operate a lemonade stand.

But profit was not the purpose of this citrus. The Democrats were making a point. And so, with a Cuban cigar box for a cash register and two plastic bottles of lemonade for

product, they displayed a hand-colored sign: "Lemonade. Boys \$1.00, Girls 79 cents."

"I forgot the L" in girls, one of the young Democrats explained.

The women received several attagirls from passers-by, a few dismissive shakes of the head — and a whole lot of puzzled looks and comments.

"You registering people to vote?"

"I'll do it on my way back."

"I don't even work over here."

"I don't take drinks from strangers."

The course of fair pay never did run smooth.

There is no real dispute that women earn less than men — 79 cents in median wages on the dollar. The problem has gained new attention recently with the publicity about the U.S. women's soccer team earning less than the men's team, women on the professional tennis circuit earning less than men, and Hollywood stars such as Jennifer Lawrence earning less than their male counterparts.

But fixing the pay gap is about as easy as selling lemonade in a cold rain. Equal-pay laws are difficult to enforce. Pay data is often private, and the burden of proof often rests with victims. Women are concentrated in lower-wage occupations, and they take more time out of the workforce for child care.

There are some ideas to reduce the gap. Paid sick and parental leave would help to offset the wages women lose as caregivers. And legislation such as the Paycheck Fairness Act would make it easier to enforce equal-pay laws, in part by making it easier to bring cases of wage discrimination.

But even a conscientious employer would have trouble eliminating the gap. The Post found that women in the Obama White House earn 13 percent less than men. And the Republican National Committee responded to the Democrats' lemonade-stand theatrics by threatening to set up a rival stand selling lemonade for 72 cents — the pay gap, according to one study, faced by women who worked in Hillary Clinton's Senate office.

Kate Houghton, the shift leader of the DNC's lemonade stand, wished no fewer than 500 commuters a "Happy Equal Pay Day." She and her colleagues handed out 1,000 "receipts" showing a table of pay disparities and asserting that the three Republican presidential candidates "don't support ensuring equal pay for women." Some commuters gave a smile, a thumbs-up or a contribution. Some ditched the DNC propaganda in the trash can on the corner. The most common reply: "No, thank you" — to the lemonade, not equal pay.

In the end, not a single woman accepted her 21-cent discount, and several customers paid extra, giving the 10 workers from the DNC receipts of \$53.60 to show for their hour's work, to be given to charity.

Proceeds might have exceeded the mid-two-figures if it hadn't started pouring, or if the guy from the Amateur Athletic Union hadn't put up a canopy and started selling donuts, or if the station manager hadn't informed the women that they weren't "authorized."

By the time the police arrived, the DNC scofflaws had decamped to Peet's Coffee for warmer beverages. Their lemonade jug remained half full.

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Equal Pay For Equal Work, Yet Hillary Pays Female Aides 88 Cents For Every \$1 A Man Makes

By Kelly Riddell

[Washington Times](#), April 12, 2016

ANALYSIS/OPINION:

In case you haven't heard, Tuesday is Equal Pay Day – a bipartisan issue.

Democrats and Republicans both believe no matter where you come from, what gender you are, or what your race is, you should be able to achieve your highest potential and nobody should be treated unfairly in the work place.

Yet it still happens. A Washington Free Beacon analysis performed over the summer found Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign paid women 88 cents for each dollar earned by men. Nationally, women earn 79 cents to every dollar a male makes.

So what should be done?

There are laws already on the books that prohibit discrimination. Those laws should be pursued to the fullest extent if and when a women feels she's being discriminated against.

Studies have also found women are hesitant to ask for raises – they need to speak up more.

Last year, a survey by Glamour magazine found 57 percent of women have never asked for a raise, compared to 46 percent of men. Another study, conducted by Citigroup and LinkedIn, found that only 27 percent of women had asked for a raise in the last year, and for those who did, 84 percent got more money.

Democrats would have you believe the federal government is the solution – by pushing through more regulations that burden small businesses and don't guarantee a fair outcome. Instead, public officials should be advocating for meritocracies and not bureaucracies – where work is rewarded by ability and talent, not seniority and privilege.

As former GOP Presidential candidate Carly Fiorina so eloquently put it: "The single greatest impediment to equal pay for equal work is the seniority system, which pays not on merit and not on performance, but on time and grade. We

don't need increased regulation to address this issue; we need flexibility for employers."

So when Mrs. Clinton says on the campaign trail, like she did on Tuesday: "Women all over America deserve a raise. There's no discount being a woman — groceries don't cost us less, rent doesn't cost us less, so why should we be paid less?" I fully agree.

Women should speak up and not be afraid to ask for the raises they deserve or holding those accountable who discriminate. The government, meanwhile, should be dismantling their own bureaucracies and promoting based on merit and performance.

Equal pay for equal work.

Obama's Comments On Clinton Email Raises Concerns Of Bias

By Kathleen Hennessey

[Associated Press](#), April 12, 2016

WASHINGTON (AP) – President Barack Obama says he believes his former secretary of state did not intentionally endanger national security in her handling of classified information. But he also says he's not trying to influence his administration's investigation into Hillary Clinton's private email server.

The White House on Tuesday was under pressure to reconcile those two statements – asserting Obama's public defense of Clinton was not an attempt to meddle in an ongoing probe and that federal investigators will not be swayed by the boss's views.

"The president is committed to ensuring that individuals who are conducting criminal prosecutions do their work without influence from politicians or anybody that's involved in politics," White House spokesman Josh Earnest said.

Earnest's reassurances came amid growing criticism that Obama had put his finger on the scale with recent comments describing Clinton's use of a private email server during her tenure as secretary of state as mere "carelessness." In an interview with Fox News Sunday, Obama seemed to embrace the Clinton campaign's suggestion that the root of the controversy is over-classification – that too much government information is classified by bureaucrats after the fact. And most notably, Obama weighed in with his views on Clinton's intent.

"She would never intentionally put America in any kind of jeopardy," he said of Clinton, who is seeking the Democratic presidential nomination.

The FBI is investigating whether sensitive information that flowed through Clinton's email server was mishandled.

There are also at least 38 civil lawsuits, including one filed by The Associated Press, seeking records related to Clinton's time as secretary of state from 2009 to 2013.

It wasn't the first time that Obama has suggested that he doesn't think there's much to the email controversy. In October, he said flatly he didn't think the set-up posed a national security problem.

Each time he weighs in, it raises legal experts' eyebrows and roils political adversaries. Republicans this week have suggested Obama is signaling prosecutors to go easy, and using a different standard for Clinton that has been applied to other administration officials investigated for mishandling information, like former CIA Director David Petraeus.

The White House routinely dodges questions about ongoing Justice Department investigations, saying it does not want to appear to be trying to influence the outcome. Obama's decision to twice express his thoughts seems to cast aside some of that caution in favor of defending a political ally and former administration official.

"It does raise concerns for prosecutors," said Peter Henning, a law professor at Wayne State University and a former federal prosecutor. "If it's a close case, how am I to judge whether to pursue charges when the president has said he doesn't think there's anything there? I don't think it will prejudice any decision but it certainly gives the appearance of that."

The White House says Obama's comments as based solely on publicly available information. The president has not asked for or received a briefing "on the confidential elements of the ongoing investigation," Earnest said. In the interview, Obama said: "I haven't been sorting through each and every aspect of this."

The president made assurances he would not intervene.

"I do not talk to the attorney general about pending investigations. I do not talk to FBI directors about pending investigations. We have a strict line, and always have maintained it," he said. "I guarantee that there is no political influence in any investigation conducted by the Justice Department, or the FBI, not just in this case, but in any case."

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Neutral In Presidential Race, Obama Digs In For Other Dems

By Josh Lederman

[Associated Press](#), April 12, 2016

In a rural stretch of Kentucky, voters picked up the phone in March to hear President Barack Obama on the line, urging them to vote for a little-known Democrat named Jeff Taylor.

That an obscure special election for a Kentucky House seat had caught the president's attention seemed odd. Yet Taylor won, joining two other victorious Democrats to deny Republicans the chance to take over the last Democratic-run legislative chamber in the South.

Though he's staying neutral in the Democratic presidential race, Obama is wading deep into Democratic primaries for Congress, state legislature and even mayoral races, cherry-picking candidates he sees as stronger while preparing to campaign in person for Democrats in the fall.

Democratic officials said Obama and Vice President Joe Biden are in high demand this year —a sharp reversal from just two years ago, when Obama was politically toxic. Most Democratic candidates in 2014 practically begged Obama and his sagging poll numbers to stay away, relegating the president to a few Democrat-friendly states like Michigan.

This year, upbeat economic news and rising approval ratings have increased his value to Democrats in the last election cycle before he leaves office.

"You're going to see ever-increasing requests for Obama and Biden to campaign for candidates this year," said Amy Dacey, the CEO of the Democratic National Committee.

So far this year, Obama has endorsed candidates in nine races, in addition to four he endorsed last year. He's backed former Gov. Ted Strickland for Senate in Ohio over Cincinnati councilman P.G. Sittenfeld, and he came to the aid of Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, who faces a surprisingly strong primary challenge despite being the chairwoman of the Democratic Party.

Obama and Biden also endorsed Katie McGinty in Pennsylvania, who faces an uphill battle to defeat former Rep. Joe Sestak in the Democratic primary for Senate. The Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, which works to elect Senate Democrats, touted the endorsements in a television ad released Tuesday as part of a \$1.1 million campaign.

In Florida, Obama sided with Rep. Patrick Murphy over Rep. Alan Grayson, a favorite of the liberal wing of the Democratic Party who is under scrutiny by the House Ethics Committee. The two Democrats are running for outgoing GOP Sen. Marco Rubio's seat.

All the Senate candidates Obama has endorsed have also been endorsed by the DSCC, a wing of the Democratic Party.

"It's mirroring what's going on with Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders, where the establishment Democrats are backing different candidates than their liberal, progressive base wants," said Andrea Bozek, communications director for

the National Republican Senatorial Committee. Bozek called it a sign of desperation that Democrats felt they needed to bring in Obama to secure their preferred candidates.

Even Democrats denied Obama's endorsement are reluctant to complain about favoritism, wary of turning off loyal Obama supporters. Tim Canova, the law school professor challenging Wasserman Schultz, said the attention actually helped because it "really put us on the map."

"It seemed like a sign that Wasserman Schultz is worried about our campaign, that she would have gone running to the White House for an endorsement," Canova said.

Two years ago, Democrats fought their toughest Senate races in conservative-leaning states where Obama has always been deeply unpopular. The map shifted this year to states Obama won twice, including New Hampshire, Nevada and Colorado — also critical states for winning the White House.

"The president right now is the most popular elected official in the country among Democrats and independents," said David Simas, the White House political director. "When you start looking at what these battleground states will be at the presidential, Senate and House level, the map is pretty wide open for the president to engage and be helpful."

Though Obama won't be on November's ballot, the stakes for his legacy are just as high. A return of the White House to GOP control would augur the likely rollback of many of his policies on health care, immigration and the environment. Yet Democrats say the chaos in the GOP presidential race has created an opening to take back the Senate and maybe even the House, preserving Obama's policies for years to come.

Obama's involvement in lower-tier races stands in contrast to his lower profile in the presidential race, where Obama is avoiding publicly choosing sides between Clinton and Sanders. White House officials said Obama will campaign full-force for the eventual nominee, but in the meantime his main role has been to attack Donald Trump.

Biden, huddling with House Democratic candidates over the weekend in New Mexico, told them having Trump or Texas Sen. Ted Cruz on the ballot would benefit Democrats in lower-tier races, said a Democratic aide who requested anonymity to discuss the private meeting. Biden has already campaigned for Senate candidates in Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Nevada.

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U.S. Senate Judiciary Chairman Grassley Tells Garland No Hearings

By Richard Cowan

[Reuters](#), April 12, 2016

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Chuck Grassley Tells Judge Garland That The Senate Won't Act On His Nomination

By Dave Boyer

[Washington Times](#), April 12, 2016

Senate Judiciary Chairman Charles Grassley told Supreme Court nominee Merrick Garland to his face Tuesday that the Senate won't consider his nomination.

Over breakfast, the Iowa Republican "explained why the Senate won't be moving forward during this hyper-partisan election year," his office said. The statement added that Mr. Grassley "thanked Judge Garland for his service," and that their 70-minute meeting in the Senate dining room was "cordial and pleasant."

Both men arrived early for the meeting and avoided journalists later.

Mr. Grassley and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell are blocking Judge Garland's nomination, saying voters should have a role in filling the high court vacancy by electing a new president to choose a nominee. President Obama and his progressive allies are trying to ramp up pressure on Republicans to hold a vote on the nomination.

The head of a conservative activist group opposing the Garland nomination praised Mr. Grassley for holding firm in his position.

"The American people are grateful that Senator Grassley is standing up to President Obama's cynical attempt to force the Senate to confirm Merrick Garland, another liberal judge who will ensure the Left dominates the Supreme Court for a generation or more," said Carrie Severino, chief counsel and policy director of the Judicial Crisis Network. "Senator Grassley understands that Merrick Garland will be the decisive fifth vote on the Court to gut the Second Amendment right to keep and bear arms, and the fifth vote to defer to unaccountable bureaucrats at federal agencies like the EPA. We thank Senator Grassley for standing with us."

But Mr. Grassley got a heavy dose of criticism on his official Instagram account after posting a photo of his meeting with Judge Garland and commenting that he had "explained why the Senate won't be moving fwd w his nomination."

"This kind of partisan politics makes me sick," one follower told Mr. Grassley in a response that was typical of dozens of negative postings. "Quit playing games and do your job."

A leading business group, the National Federation of Independent Business, released a comprehensive scorecard of Judge Garland's rulings Tuesday showing that he has ruled against business interests 90 percent of the time.

Judge Garland's meeting Tuesday with Mr. Grassley was a higher-stakes sequel to their encounter of 20 years ago, when the Iowa Republican fought against Judge Garland's nomination for a seat on a key federal appeals court.

Mr. Grassley led the battle in 1995 and 1996 against President Bill Clinton's nomination of Judge Garland to the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, in a dispute over the number of judges on the court that is viewed as a steppingstone to the Supreme Court. Then, as now, Mr. Grassley said he had no beef with Judge Garland's qualifications.

The Senate finally confirmed Judge Garland for the appeals court in 1997, after Mr. Clinton won re-election and submitted the nomination again.

Judge Garland also was meeting Tuesday with Republican Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska. At least 17 GOP senators have agreed to meet with the nominee, although only two have called for the Senate to hold confirmation hearings.

The White House released a letter Tuesday from 15 former presidents of the American Bar Association calling on Senate Republican leaders to hold a vote on the Garland nomination. They emphasized "the need for the judicial system to function independently of partisan influences" and said Judge Garland has "sterling" credentials.

"A vacancy on the highest court in the land can result in split 4-4 decisions, which can leave inconsistencies among lower courts unresolved and different rulings on federal law throughout the country unsettled," they wrote. "Such uncertainty, confusion, and ambiguity would be detrimental to the rule of law."

Grassley Holds Firm Against Supreme Court Action After Meeting With Garland

By Mike Debonis

[Washington Post](#), April 12, 2016

The man standing between Supreme Court nominee Merrick B. Garland and a Senate hearing on his confirmation said Tuesday that an hourlong meeting with Garland had done nothing to change his mind.

Sen. Charles E. Grassley (R-Iowa), the Judiciary Committee chairman, hosted Garland for breakfast in the private Senate Dining Room in what was the most anticipated meeting yet between a GOP senator and President Obama's choice for the high court.

Garland kept silent upon leaving, as is customary for Supreme Court nominees, and Grassley left through a back door without speaking to reporters. His office later issued a statement calling the meeting "cordial and pleasant" but one that did not change Grassley's determination not to act.

"As he indicated last week, Grassley explained why the Senate won't be moving forward during this hyper-partisan election year" and "thanked Judge Garland for his service," read the statement. The only publicly released photo of the meeting came via Grassley's Instagram account.

The meeting and its predictable outcome highlighted the risks and the limits of what White House officials have described as a "play it straight" strategy — to treat Garland's confirmation process in the most typical way despite the atypical circumstances.

That has included an effort not only to secure courtesy meetings with Republican senators but also to build support for action on Garland's nomination from luminaries in the legal community. This week, for instance, 15 former presidents of the American Bar Association called on Senate leaders to take action on Garland's nomination.

As the gatekeeper to further Senate action on Garland's nomination, Grassley has acted in lockstep with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), who has vowed to leave the vacancy created by Justice Antonin Scalia's February death to be filled by the next president.

That decision, the former Bar Association presidents wrote in a Monday letter, "injects a degree of politics into the judicial branch that materially hampers the effective operation of our nation's highest court and the lower courts over which it presides." The signers represent 15 of the past 24 presidents of the ABA, which plays a formal role in the Supreme Court confirmation process by rating nominees' qualifications.

While the ABA has not made a formal assessment of Garland, the former presidents noted that "Democrats and Republicans alike have noted Chief Judge Garland's sterling credentials."

"The President has fulfilled his constitutional duty, and it is time for the members of the United States Senate to fulfill theirs by holding a fair hearing and timely vote for the President's nominee," they said.

William H. Neukom, who served as ABA president in 2007 and 2008, told reporters in a conference call arranged by the White House that blockade of Garland's nomination is "frankly appalling."

"This is a very unseemly instance of one branch of a three-branch government hobbling a second branch, the judiciary," he said. "How dare one branch under-resource a second branch and keep it from doing its job."

Another ex-president — Dennis W. Archer, the former Detroit mayor — said he expected everyday Americans to take a more active role in the protesting the blockade, to the point that they might influence the coming election: "I think it's going to be much more, if it gets stretched out, that will take place."

The White House and Senate Democrats have continued to follow a confirmation game plan aimed at

keeping pressure on Republican senators who are up for reelection this year.

Garland met with three of them Tuesday. After finishing breakfast with Grassley — and a short bathroom break — he returned to the Senate Dining Room to meet with Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska). In the afternoon, he met with Sen. Pat Toomey (R-Pa.).

Obama spokesman Eric Schultz declined to detail what was discussed at the meetings Tuesday but said that Garland “has enjoyed this process.”

“He finds these conversations to be instructive and helpful and thoughtful and very substantive,” he said.

Those three senators all say they will continue to hold fast against Garland, and they have backing from a vocal and well-funded group of conservative activists who fear the impact he could have on the high court in replacing a stalwart conservative like Scalia.

Carrie Severino, chief counsel and policy director of the Judicial Crisis Network, thanked Grassley for his stance after the meeting: “Senator Grassley understands that Merrick Garland will be the decisive fifth vote on the Court to gut the Second Amendment right to keep and bear arms and the fifth vote to defer to unaccountable bureaucrats at federal agencies like the EPA.”

But Senate Minority Leader Harry M. Reid (D-Nev.) continued hammering away at Grassley’s refusal to take up Garland’s nomination, calling him out in a Senate floor speech for holding their breakfast “in private, far away from the public eye.”

“These are not the actions of a senator and chairman who is confident with his decision to block a Supreme Court nominee,” he said. “This is the behavior of a senator who knows he’s on the wrong side of the Constitution, and the wrong side of history.”

Senator Grassley And Judge Garland Meet, And Rehash The Obvious

By David M. Herszenhorn

[New York Times](#), April 12, 2016

WASHINGTON — It was a balance-of-power breakfast.

Senator Charles E. Grassley of Iowa, the Republican chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, played host to Judge Merrick B. Garland, President Obama’s nominee for the Supreme Court, in the Senate dining room on Tuesday morning. Yogurt parfait was not the point. But what was? Almost all Senate Republicans have made clear they will not consider any court nomination as long as Mr. Obama is president.

But while the outcome for Mr. Garland may be preordained — at least for this year — the outcome of the political fight over the court vacancy is far from certain. And

the stakes, in the presidential election as well as in congressional races, could not be higher.

Mr. Grassley, who is up for re-election and who has the power as Judiciary Committee chairman to convene confirmation hearings, has come under pressure in Washington and in Iowa for refusing to do so.

By that calculation, Mr. Grassley, for the benefit of voters back home, was perhaps hoping to appear to be doing something — at least showing Judge Garland the courtesy of breakfast at the Capitol — when he was actually doing nothing.

Or, in the inside-out ways of Washington, Mr. Grassley might have been trying to make doing something — holding a substantive conversation with the president’s nominee — look like doing nothing, to avoid drawing the ire of Republican leaders who have maneuvered forcefully to hold ranks against Judge Garland’s confirmation.

Only two Republican senators, Susan Collins of Maine and Mark S. Kirk of Illinois, have called for hearings and a vote on Judge Garland’s nomination. The Senate majority leader, Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, has made it clear that further defections will not be tolerated.

For his part, Mr. Grassley never seemed entirely comfortable with an all-out blocking effort. Still, he signed a written pledge not to act on the nomination. Either way, the stated purpose of Tuesday’s get-together was for Mr. Grassley to explain in person why Senate Republicans were not going to allow Mr. Obama to fill the seat left vacant by the death of Justice Antonin Scalia.

Or, put another way, it was to deliver a lesson on the balance of powers: the Constitution gives the president the authority to nominate justices, but the power to advise and consent lies with the Senate. Translation for Judge Garland: your nomination is not happening this year.

And yet, their conversation lasted for nearly an hour — longer than many of the other courtesy meetings that Judge Garland has had with Democrats. Judge Garland had eggs and toast. Senator Grassley opted for oatmeal. Despite the seeming tough odds, White House officials were still hoping for a breakthrough. That did not seem very likely, based on Mr. Grassley’s description of the breakfast as “pleasant” in a Twitter message, adding that he explained to Judge Garland why the Senate would not be moving forward with his nomination.

Judge Garland, who has developed a reputation of punctuality at the Capitol, arrived 20 minutes before the 8 a.m. breakfast. Mr. Grassley, who is known for waking early and jogging at 4 a.m., was apparently already in the dining room. Neither man spoke to reporters before or afterward.

Mr. Garland and his entourage left the dining room shortly before 9 a.m., apparently only to realize that his next meeting, with Senator Lisa Murkowski, Republican of Alaska, was also tentatively scheduled in the dining room.

Continuing to make the rounds, Judge Garland was also scheduled to meet later in the day with Senator Patrick J. Toomey, Republican of Pennsylvania.

Democrats, meanwhile, gleefully distributed news coverage from Iowa of a diner that had agreed to a request by liberal groups and offered up some new specials in honor of the meeting between Mr. Grassley and Judge Garland. The restaurant, the Ritual Cafe in Des Moines, was planning to serve Obstruction Oats, oatmeal topped with hemp nuts, and Garland Granola. The Associated Press reported, as well as a Justice Delayed Bowl: steamed eggs roasted with peppers and olives.

Senator Chris Coons, Democrat of Delaware, who is a member of the Judiciary Committee and had urged Mr. Obama to select a consensus, centrist nominee like Judge Garland, had a more leveled response to the breakfast, saying he hoped even more Republicans would follow Mr. Grassley's lead and give Judge Garland some face time. "I think advice and consent has to mean a meeting, a hearing and a vote," Mr. Coons said. "Otherwise, we're not doing our job."

Top GOP Senator Meets Obama's Supreme Court Pick To Tell Him There Will Be No Vote

By Lisa Mascaro, Contact Reporter
[Los Angeles Times](#), April 12, 2016

The Republican chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee sat down for breakfast with President Obama's Supreme Court nominee Tuesday as a courtesy meeting, to tell the judge there would be no confirmation hearing or vote.

Meanwhile, another breakfast message was being served up in Sen. Charles E. Grassley's home state of Iowa, where he faces opposition for enforcing the GOP's blockade against Judge Merrick Garland.

"Confirmation Coffee," "Obstruction Oats" and "Garland Granola" were all on the menu at Ritual Cafe in Des Moines, a reminder of the risks Republicans face for continuing to deny Obama's ability to fill the court vacancy.

Despite the resistance on Capitol Hill, the White House continues to usher Garland, the chief judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, to meet with senators. The breakfast summit with Grassley was a milestone of sorts for Obama's efforts to fill the vacancy that has left the court split 4-4 on some issues since the sudden death of Justice Antonin Scalia in February.

But beyond the photo ops and handshakes, all but two of the Republicans who have met with the judge so far said they are merely holding courtesy sessions, with no plans to vote. Most want the next president to make the court pick.

"Had pleasant bfast w Judge Garland this morning," Grassley wrote on Instagram, after the two broke bread in the Senators-only dining room in the Capitol. "Explained why the

Senate won't be moving fwd w his nomination. Next prez will decide after the ppl have a voice."

Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), who met with Garland in her Capitol office later Tuesday morning, "continues to respect the Judiciary Committee's decision not to hold hearings," an aide said.

And Sen. Patrick J. Toomey (R-Penn.), who faces a potentially difficult re-election this fall, also was meeting with Garland on Tuesday.

Republicans believe their blockade is sustainable through the November election, when they will try to retain majority control of the Senate. While the majority of voters disagree with the strategy — most Americans want the Senate to hold hearings to consider the nominee — conservative activists are on the GOP's side.

"Grassroots activists across the country are thankful to Sen. Grassley for his steadfast and principled stand that the American people should have a voice in the selection of the next Supreme Court Justice," said Tea Party Patriots president Jenny Beth Martin, who added that "Obama is attempting to bully the Senate" into confirming a judge who would lock in a liberal majority on the court.

The White House, though, is not letting up, and on Tuesday the administration released a letter of support from 15 past presidents of the American Bar Assn., who said "there is no election year exception" to the Senate's duties to consider the nominee.

"The president has fulfilled his constitutional duty, and it is time for the members of the United States Senate to fulfill theirs by holding a fair hearing and timely vote," the legal experts wrote, explaining that leaving the seat vacant "injects a degree of politics into the judicial branch that materially hampers the effective operation of our nation's highest court."

The split on the court has already shown both the struggle the eight justices face in avoiding deadlock, but also their willingness to push ahead — as happened when the justices tried their hand at a solution for a politically divisive case over contraceptive coverage in the Affordable Care Act.

More difficult decisions, however, await.

On Monday, the court is scheduled to hear one of the landmark cases of the term — the challenge from Texas and other states against Obama's immigration executive actions, which could decide whether millions of immigrants will be eligible for deportation relief.

For the latest from Congress and 2016 campaign follow @LisaMascaro

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Field Poll: Merrick Garland Should Get Confirmation Hearings

By Christopher Cadelago
[McClatchy](#), April 12, 2016

Californians overwhelmingly believe President Barack Obama's recent U.S. Supreme Court nominee should at least receive Senate confirmation hearings.

A new poll finds that 64 percent believe federal appeals court Judge Merrick Garland, Obama's selection to replace the late Justice Antonin Scalia, should receive Senate confirmation hearings rather than hovering in election-year limbo.

Just 29 percent take the position of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, who wants to "revisit" the issue when the next president can nominate someone. The results mirror several national surveys taken over the last month.

The latest Field Poll discovered that opinions on the matter, like most issues, are charged by a high degree of partisanship: 80 percent of Democrats want hearings, compared with 36 percent of Republicans.

Congress' refusal to act on the nomination is the latest example of the kind of inaction that fuels public discord here, poll director Mark DiCamillo said in the accompanying memo.

The same survey found that while nearly six in 10 Californians offer an upbeat assessment of the job Obama is now doing, a continuation of recent polls where he has been at highs not seen since his "honeymoon" phase, just 15 percent of voters approve of the job Congress is doing compared with 80 percent who disapprove.

About 80 percent of independents are unhappy with Congress. Some 68 percent of independents believe Garland should get hearings, while 21 percent want to wait.

Several Republican senators in the last few weeks have agreed to meetings with Garland, but fewer have called for Senate Judiciary Committee hearings.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., who serves on the Judiciary Committee, has said Garland's record calls for fair consideration hearings and a vote. Anything short would "further diminish" the Senate's reputation, she said.

Last week, at the University of Chicago Law School, Obama similarly warned about the prospect of appointing judges becoming so partisan that the "courts will be just an extension of our legislatures and our elections and our politics." "That," Obama added, "erodes the institutional integrity of the judicial branch."

Toomey Knocks Garland After Long Meeting

By Nolan D. McCaskill

[Politico](#), April 12, 2016

Under relentless criticism from his Democratic foes, GOP Sen. Pat Toomey lingered with Supreme Court nominee Merrick Garland into the evening on Tuesday for a meeting that lasted more than an hour.

Yet when Toomey emerged, he was more resolute than ever that Garland should not be confirmed. And it wasn't just the principle that the court seat should remain vacant. For Toomey, it's also the person.

Toomey said that his main issue regards executive overreach — that President Barack Obama has circumvented Congress, and future presidents will do the same. On that topic, Garland did little to sway to him.

"We talked about concerns I have about his record and his judicial philosophy. Unfortunately, for me, throughout the process of this discussion, he did not assuage my concerns," Toomey told reporters. "I'm not convinced that he would be willing to play the role of a sufficiently aggressive check on an administration."

The Republican senator, who Democrats are aiming to defeat in the fall election, also expressed the GOP's message that voters should have a say in the vacancy left by Antonin Scalia's death. Senate Judiciary Chairman Chuck Grassley of Iowa, who had breakfast with Toomey on Tuesday morning, made the same point.

"We are in the midst of a very vigorous presidential election campaign right now. And the decision as to who will replace Justice Scalia is going to affect the balance on the court for perhaps a generation," Toomey said. "The best decision is for the American people is to have some say in this."

The leading Democratic candidates vying to take on Toomey, former Rep. Joe Sestak and Katie McGinty, attacked the incumbent this week over the court vacancy. Sestak said on Tuesday that Toomey has an "unmatched record of obstructionism at every level of government," while McGinty called the meeting an "empty gesture" because there was not expected to be a discussion of judicial philosophy.

In fact, there was. And despite his critical comments, Toomey said that Garland is "impressive ... intelligent ... likable and pleasant." Sen. Cory Booker (D-N.J.), who met with Garland minutes before Toomey did, offered a similar opinion of the judge.

"These are the kinds of conversations that should be held in an open forum, a hearing so that the public, as well as all senators, can benefit from the conversations that are now being had behind closed doors," Booker said.

Republicans Finally Confirmed A Judge. Is This Obama's Last One?

[Huffington Post](#), April 11, 2016

WASHINGTON — Something rare happened Monday. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) let a judicial nominee get a vote: Waverly Crenshaw, a Tennessee district court nominee.

It's been two months since Republicans confirmed a judge. If anybody should have been confirmed by now, it's Crenshaw. Nobody opposed him — he was confirmed 92 to 0. Both of his GOP senators strongly supported him. The court seat he's filling has become so overloaded with cases that it's

become a judicial emergency. Yet Crenshaw, who unanimously cleared the Judiciary Committee nine months ago, had to wait almost a year and a half for a vote.

If it takes this long to confirm a judge that Republicans actually like, things don't look good for President Barack Obama's other court picks. Never mind the ongoing GOP blockade against his Supreme Court nominee; there are 31 other judicial nominees waiting for action in the Judiciary Committee and 14 more ready to be confirmed right now. None are scheduled for votes. Republicans are already confirming judges at the slowest pace in more than 50 years – and the Senate tends to slow down confirmations as it gets closer to November in presidential election years.

Crenshaw could be it for Obama.

McConnell spokesman Don Stewart wouldn't say when, or if, the Senate will vote to confirm the next judicial nominees on the list.

"I don't have any new announcements yet," he said.

The delays are part of a broader GOP strategy to punt judicial confirmations to next year, when a Republican might be in the White House and nominate people they like better. Crenshaw is only the 17th judge who has been confirmed since the GOP became the Senate majority in January 2015. By contrast, in the final two years of President George W. Bush's term, Democrats controlled the Senate and had confirmed 68 judicial nominees by this point.

Court vacancies have been ticking up in the meantime. They're at 78 now, and 34 of them are emergencies. When court seats go unfilled, people's cases can get delayed for years and judges struggle with burnout.

There could be a little more movement before Obama leaves the Oval Office. Sen. John Cornyn (R-Texas) told a Politico reporter Monday evening that he "would be surprised if [Crenshaw] is the last one of the year."

But if confirmations do hit a wall until 2017, or come close to it, it's not just Obama's problem. There are GOP senators with courts in their states that desperately need vacancies filled, and who may not get them anytime soon, despite the fact that their party controls the Senate.

Take Idaho Republican Sens. Mike Crapo and Jim Risch. Last week, they enthusiastically endorsed

Obama's nomination of David Nye to the U.S. District Court for the District of Idaho. That court has two seats on it, one of which is vacant and a judicial emergency. It also has a heavy enough workload that it should have a third judgeship added to it, according to the U.S. Judicial Conference

, the policy-making arm of the federal court system. So this court, if it's fully functioning, should have three judges on it.

But Nye is at the bottom of the list in the Judiciary Committee. He still has to get a hearing scheduled, have a hearing, go through a round of follow-up questions from the hearing, get voted out, get scheduled for a confirmation vote

and then have a confirmation vote. There's time to get through all of that between now and the end of the year, but if Republicans plan to move judges in order – and at the pace Crenshaw moved – Nye won't get a vote until 2017 or even early 2018. That leaves the Idaho court with one judge until then.

Crapo and Risch have already met with McConnell and Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), chairman of the Judiciary Committee, to try to get the process moving.

"It's doable," Risch told The Spokesman-Review on Monday. "Is it going to happen? You know, that's like trying to say who's going to be president of the United States these days."

Carl Tobias, a law professor at the University of Richmond who specializes in judicial confirmations, wasn't optimistic about the GOP picking up the pace.

"I think they're just going to run out the clock this year, in the hope that Republicans will win the White House," Tobias said. "That will leave the next president with 100 vacancies to fill and 40 to 50 emergencies."

But what if Hillary Clinton wins? Don't Republicans run the risk of her putting forward more liberal nominees than Obama?

"Hillary should just do whatever she wants to do," he said.

The Obama Administration Is Taking Steps To Help People With Disabilities Who Are Struggling To Pay Student Loans Get Their Debt Erased

By Jennifer C Kerr

[Associated Press](#), April 12, 2016

WASHINGTON — The Obama administration is taking steps to help people with disabilities get their student loan debt forgiven, safeguarding their Social Security payments.

The Education Department on Tuesday announced a new process to better identify hundreds of thousands of borrowers who are eligible to apply for an existing federal loan forgiveness program. The program is for people who are permanently disabled and cannot work.

Under Secretary of Education Ted Mitchell says too few borrowers have been taking advantage of the program because they may not know about it or the process of applying was too complicated. Mitchell said one woman who had been struggling with side effects from breast cancer that left her permanently disabled tried repeatedly to get her debt discharged — a process that took seven years.

"That's not how government should work," Mitchell said in an interview. "These are people who are struggling with health issues. We want to take one worry off their plate."

Letters from the department will be sent next week to about 387,000 people who the agency has identified as

eligible — loans worth about \$7.8 billion. Of those, about 179,000 people have student loans that are currently in default.

Borrowers whose loans are forgiven then would not be at risk of having their Social Security or disability payments seized.

President Barack Obama called for a more streamlined process as part of his Student Aid Bill of Rights last year. Mitchell said the department worked with the Social Security Administration to identify people with federal student loans who were also receiving disability payments, and deemed permanently disabled.

That group of about 387,000 will receive letters, beginning April 18, that will explain they are eligible for loan forgiveness.

The letter will include an application that they will simply sign and return. Unlike other borrowers, they will not be required to submit documentation of their eligibility. They only need to sign and return the application.

Once the loan is erased, a three-year monitoring period will begin. If the borrower's earning status changes and increases above a certain threshold, he or she may have to start making payments again.

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Obama To Forgive The Student Debt Of Permanently Disabled People

By Danielle Douglas-Gabriel, Washington Post
[Washington Post](#), April 12, 2016

The Obama administration plans to forgive \$7.7 billion in federal student loans held by nearly 400,000 permanently disabled Americans.

By law, anyone with a severe disability is eligible to have the government discharge their federal student loans. The administration took steps four years ago to make the process easier by letting people who are totally and permanently disabled use their Social Security designation to apply for a discharge, but few took advantage. The Department of Education is now taking it upon itself to identify eligible borrowers and guide them through the steps to discharge their loans.

"Too many eligible borrowers were falling through the cracks, unaware they were eligible for relief," said Education Under Secretary Ted Mitchell in a statement. "Americans with disabilities have a right to student loan relief. And we need to make it easier, not harder, for them to receive the benefits they are due."

Working with the Social Security Administration, the department has been identifying borrowers receiving disability payments and have the specific designation of "Medical

Improvement Not Expected," which indicates they are eligible for the discharge. The agencies found 387,000 matches in its first review. About 179,000 of those people are currently in default on their loans, putting them at risk of losing their tax refunds and having their Social Security benefits garnished.

"The creation of the matching program is a great first step, but the administration needs to go further to ensure that no borrower who has a right to student loan relief has their benefits taken," said Persis Yu, the National Consumer Law Center's student loan borrower assistance project director. "Borrowers receiving SSDI need these payments to survive."

Starting next week, borrowers identified in the match will receive a letter from the government explaining the steps needed to receive a discharge. They will not be required to submit documentation of their eligibility, unlike disabled borrowers who apply for the discharge on their own. Notification letters will be sent over a 16-week period, and followed up with a second letter after 120 days.

Tuesday's announcement is an outgrowth of President Obama's Student Aid Bill of Rights, which directed federal agencies to overhaul the way Americans repay student loans.

Obama Administration To Forgive Billions In Student Debt For Disabled Americans

Identifying people who qualify for program that's already in place

By Josh Mitchell

[Wall Street Journal](#), April 12, 2016

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Tax-Rule Changes Ripple Widely

Treasury's new rules will force many firms to change their internal financing strategies

By Richard Rubin

[Wall Street Journal](#), April 12, 2016

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

IRS Must Publicize Sensitive Tea Party Data Obtained In Targeting, Obama Administration Says

By Stephen Dinan

[Washington Times](#), April 12, 2016

The IRS says it has stopped targeting the tea party — but three years later, the tax agency is still holding on to the sensitive information it pried from the conservative groups through invasive questions, and officials are even vowing to make the answers public.

Groups caught up in the scandal say that is proof the targeting is continuing, and they want the IRS to expunge the

information or, at the very least, to make sure it is never released.

Obama administration officials insist they have stopped targeting but say the groups are at fault for following the misguided IRS requests for information. Now, the administration says, there is nothing the tax agency can do but make the information public as the law requires.

On Thursday, a federal appeals court in Washington will be asked to referee the dispute, just one of the legal problems still plaguing the IRS after its 2013 admission that it inappropriately singled out conservative and tea party groups for intrusive scrutiny.

"They asked for things to which they were not entitled," said Cleta Mitchell, an attorney for True the Vote, one of the tea party nonprofits that got caught up in the targeting scandal. "This is the fruit of the poisonous tree."

The IRS acknowledged that the questions it asked were inappropriate and weren't needed to decide on tea party groups' applications for nonprofit status.

Questions included such sensitive information as the names of all financial contributors; lists of family members, details of their political affiliations and speculation about their plans to run for office; and details of organization members' outside jobs.

Groups were even told that they must detail members' private communications with their local legislators or any contact with reporters.

Tea party groups said the questions trampled on their First Amendment rights to freedom of speech and association.

Some tea party organizations, advised by their attorneys, refused to comply. Others figured that the IRS had the upper hand, so they turned over the information despite misgivings.

The IRS has apologized for the intrusive questions but still holds on to the information it gleaned from dozens of tea party groups from 2010 through 2013.

The agency did not provide responses to questions from The Washington Times about how many groups were still awaiting approval, nor did it say what it planned to do with the reams of information pried from tea party groups.

But in briefs with the appeals court, the Obama administration says the fault lies with the tea party organizations that complied with the IRS requests.

"The IRS expressly advised plaintiff that, if the application were approved, the IRS 'will be required by law to make' the 'information that you submit in response to this letter available for public inspection,'" administration attorneys said. "Plaintiff still submitted the information to the IRS to support its application, knowing that if it were granted, the information would be subject to public inspection."

According to the IRS, tea party groups could have simply ignored the agency's demands, then sued if their applications were denied.

Fat chance, the tea party groups replied.

They said that under IRS rules, applications without all of the information requested are considered incomplete and the cases are closed without any final determination. No determination means no chance to sue, the tea party groups said.

"Under the threat of its application being closed, TTV chose to provide information to the IRS, information it believed was requested in the ordinary course of the application process. The retention of such information is an 'affront to the taxpayer's privacy,'" the group argued.

The tea party groups likely have a tough road ahead of them.

A lower court dismissed True the Vote's complaints along with those of several dozen other groups. It found no current harm because the IRS says it is no longer singling out the tea party and almost all of the groups have been approved for tax-exempt status.

Attorneys for the tea party groups say the judge did not address the sensitive information that the IRS still holds.

Lawsuit Aims To Overturn Obama's Clean Power Plan

By Bobby Magill

[Scientific American](#), April 12, 2016

The Clean Power Plan, the Obama administration's most sweeping climate change policy, is being challenged in federal appeals court and its future is expected to hinge on the outcome of at least one court decision—and possibly two—over the next year.

The merits of the lawsuit are set to be argued June 2 before the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Washington, D.C. Groups on both sides of the issue filed "friend of the court" briefs at the end of March. The documents provide a telling glimpse into each side's arguments and whether the Obama administration has the authority to enforce the plan.

Here are seven things to know about the Clean Power Plan as it winds its way through the courts: Obama's Most Significant Climate Policy

The Clean Power Plan is the Obama administration's policy to cut carbon dioxide emissions from coal-fired electric power plants by 32 percent below 2005 levels by 2030. Under the plan, which was critical to the Paris climate agreement slated to be signed this month, the Environmental Protection Agency plans to regulate power plant emissions under the Clean Air Act. Each state has its own emissions reductions goal to meet under the plan.

Cutting greenhouse gas emissions from coal-fired power plants is critical to any solution to climate change

because they're the largest single source of emissions driving global warming. The Clean Power Plan gave the U.S. credibility during the Paris climate negotiations, and during those talks last December, America's ability to make good on its promise to cut emissions set an example for other countries to do the same. 24 States Are Suing

Nearly half of all the states want to stop the Clean Power Plan because they believe it's an illegal attempt to "reorganize the nation's energy grid" and an attack on the coal industry that will lead to higher electricity costs, even though the EPA says the plan will lead to lower electric power bills for homeowners.

With the fervent support of the coal industry and some utilities, 24 states including Texas, Alabama, New Jersey, West Virginia and Wyoming, have sued the EPA. They are asking the courts to declare the plan unconstitutional partly because they say that the federal government does not have the authority to regulate a state's carbon emissions under the Clean Air Act.

The plan was finalized in 2015 and was supposed to take effect this year. In February, it was temporarily blocked by the U.S. Supreme Court without explanation. The stay remains in effect until the U.S. Court of Appeals in Washington, D.C., decides the case, or the Supreme Court decides the case on appeal.

Last year, New Jersey Environmental Protection Commissioner Bob Martin said the Clean Power Plan is tantamount to "unprecedented regulatory overreach."

"The final rule punishes states, including New Jersey, that have already achieved significant reductions in carbon emissions by setting even stricter goals for them even though many other states have made much less progress in reducing emissions and are given less stringent targets than New Jersey under the final rule," Martin said.

The federal appeals court in D.C. will hear the merits of the case in oral arguments at the June hearing, and the judges could rule on it later this year. If the ruling is appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, the outcome could depend on the makeup of the court and whether Judge Merrick Garland, President Obama's Supreme Court nominee to replace Justice Antonin Scalia, is confirmed as the tie-breaking vote on the high court. The Lawsuit is Gigantic

The case against the Clean Power Plan is the consolidation of 38 separate cases. In addition to the states opposing the plan, groups suing include utilities such as the Alabama Power Company and coal companies such as Murray Energy, the largest underground coal mining company in the U.S.

Not all coal-fired power plant operators oppose the Clean Power Plan, however. Virginia-based Dominion Energy says in a court filing that the Clean Power Plan "is compatible with current trends toward additional renewable and natural gas generation in the power sector based on market

conditions and customer demands. Dominion said the plan's "effects on power plants and customers can be successfully managed" if emissions trading is allowed and states are allowed to be flexible with the timing of their emissions reductions.

Anyone wanting to influence the outcome of the case had until the end of March to file a "friend of the court" brief. Most of those briefs support the EPA and the Clean Power Plan. EPA Says Emissions Pose 'Monumental Threat'

Those arguing in favor of the Clean Power Plan don't hold back about the urgency they see in the need to slash carbon emissions, according to appeals court filings from the EPA and numerous states and nonprofit groups supporting the plan.

In the EPA's argument defending the plan, the agency calls carbon emissions from coal-fired power plants a "monumental threat to Americans' health and welfare" by causing climate change, which leads to rising seas, coastal flooding, threatened water supplies, the spread of infectious disease and more frequent extreme weather.

The agency said the Clean Air Act gives it the authority to reduce these threats by limiting carbon pollution from power plants in the same way the EPA has regulated other forms of air pollution from power plants and other sources for decades.

The states and companies suing to kill the Clean Power Plan "seek to thwart any federal limitation on power plants' voluminous CO2 emissions," or at least render those regulations so impotent that they'd fail to address any threat from climate change, the EPA said in its court filing. Scientists: The Plan is Key to Paris Agreement

Climate scientists who are acting as "friends of the court" in the case say the Clean Power Plan is the only federal policy capable of enabling the U.S. to uphold its end of the Paris climate agreement and halt catastrophic consequences of global warming..

"Actions to reduce climate change, such as the Clean Power Plan, are necessary to slow these consequences and prevent worse from occurring," according to a brief filed by 20 climate scientists, including Drew Shindell of Duke University, Noah Diffenbaugh of Stanford University, Steven Wofsy of Harvard, and Michael Oppenheimer of Princeton University. (Oppenheimer is the vice-chair of Climate Central's board of directors.)

They said the Clean Power Plan is designed to achieve "unprecedented" greenhouse gas emissions reductions and no other U.S. policy exists that will do more to reduce climate change-driving pollution.

"We view the Clean Power Plan, and its promise as an effective tool for reducing one of the primary sources of anthropogenic carbon, as a welcome tool for preventing and reducing the negative impacts of human-caused climate

change,” the scientists said. Major U.S. Cities Want to Cut Emissions

Countering the 24 states suing to stop the Clean Power Plan are California, New York, Illinois, Massachusetts and 14 other states plus the District of Columbia and the cities of New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Philadelphia and South Miami. They have expressed concern for the health of their residents and the long term viability of their economies.

State officials say their communities are already experiencing sea level rise, increasingly severe storms and prolonged droughts because of climate change, and they fear these events will only get worse. They’re counting on the EPA to regulate the carbon emissions that could submerge them beneath the ocean in the coming decades, they said.

Whereas the states pushing to kill the Clean Power Plan say the EPA is coercing states to reduce emissions, the states supporting the plan say the EPA’s power to cut carbon pollution from power plants is “undisputed” and if a state chooses not to comply with the plan, the EPA will regulate power plants directly.

The Clean Power Plan is critical, they said, because emissions don’t respect state lines—pollution crosses borders. Without the Clean Power Plan, states “may be unable to obtain needed reductions in carbon dioxide emissions from existing power plants located in other states,” the brief says. The ‘Most Complex Machine Ever Made’

The Clean Power Plan is often discussed in the context of cutting greenhouse gas emissions, but it does something quite unique, according to a court filing from five electric power grid experts arguing in favor of the plan.

The plan harnesses the power of the “most complex machine ever made”—the U.S. electric power grid. Here’s why: Every electric power system in the U.S. is part of one of the country’s three primary electric power grids, each of which is an incredibly complex machine connecting a web of power lines and electric power plants.

The Clean Power Plan “harnesses the unique interconnectedness” of the U.S. power grids that helps reduce carbon emissions, the engineers wrote. Grid operators routinely shift between different power plants—coal-fired plants for when demand for electricity is low, and natural gas-fired power plants for when demand is high.

The plan will lead to more reliance on natural gas power plants and renewables while promoting energy efficiency without leading to blackouts when the sun isn’t shining or the wind isn’t blowing, they said.

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Audit: EPA Lax Guarding Drinking Water From Energy Waste

By Ian James

[USA Today](#), April 12, 2016

A federal review has faulted the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for not adequately safeguarding drinking water supplies from the increasing amount of wastewater generated by the oil and gas industries, which have boosted production during the past two decades.

The EPA has not consistently carried out oversight of programs that regulate injection wells where oil and natural gas companies send streams of wastewater into the ground, and therefore is unable to properly assess whether sources of drinking water are being protected across the country, the Government Accountability Office said in a report to members of Congress. The government audit also found that EPA has failed to adequately collect information from state and regional regulators about inspections and other enforcement actions.

“The most important thing is that finally the government investigators confirm that EPA does not have the adequate amount of information to safely oversee its programs and ensure that underground sources of drinking water are protected,” said John Noel, national oil and gas campaigns coordinator for Clean Water Action in Washington. “It confirms our suspicion that drinking water is not being protected at the highest levels.”

The report comes at a time of increased scrutiny around how the EPA and states oversee drinking water safety, following the lead-contamination crisis in Flint, Mich., and an ever-increasing series of revelations about problems with other drinking water systems across the United States and holes in the regulatory process. For instance, last month, a USA TODAY NETWORK investigation revealed that almost 2,000 additional water systems spanning all 50 states had exceeded federal standards for lead contamination, and that 180 of those water systems also had been cited for failing to notify consumers about the high lead levels.

An increase in U.S. oil and gas production since the 2000s has led to growing amounts of wastewater, and much of that water ends up routed back into aquifers through a type of injection wells called “class II” wells. The GAO said that, as of 2013, there were more than 176,000 of these wells across the country, in states such as Pennsylvania, Virginia, Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico and California.

State agencies and EPA regional offices are supposed to report information to the EPA about their regulation of the injection of oil and gas wastewater into aquifers. The EPA is charged with assessing whether those programs are effectively preventing potential contamination of drinking water. But GAO auditors found the federal agency “has not consistently conducted oversight activities necessary to assess whether state and EPA-managed programs are protecting underground sources of drinking water.”

“Without well-specific data on inspections, EPA cannot assess whether state and EPA-managed programs are

meeting annual inspection goals,” the GAO said in the report, which was released on March 28.

Among the problems identified was a failure by front-line regulators to report serious violations to EPA. GAO’s investigators examined types of violations ranging from “unauthorized injection” to lapses in reporting and “failure to plug” a well in seven states — Colorado, Kentucky, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania and Texas. They found 29 of the 93 significant violations should have been reported to the EPA on a form. Only seven, however, were properly reported as required.

The EPA said it generally agrees with much of the GAO’s analysis and findings, and has agreed to “take actions to best advance our data collection and oversight efforts.”

Various oil and gas extraction processes generate wastewater, including hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, which involves injecting water, sand and chemicals under high pressure. In order to have aquifers exempted from the requirements of the Safe Drinking Water Act, oil and gas companies can apply to the EPA — a process that in many states begins with a review by state regulators. When an aquifer is declared exempt, the lifting of protections allows companies to inject fluids or wastewater into aquifers.

Noel said the injection of wastewater into aquifers is cause for concern because the water is often much saltier than seawater and can contain heavy metals as well as naturally occurring radioactive materials. He said it’s important the government review is putting a spotlight on the weaknesses in oversight, especially as drought strains water supplies in many parts of the West.

“You would think that an act of writing off a potential drinking water source would at least be coupled with rigorous oversight and accountability,” Noel said. “The oil and gas industry is exploiting these lapses in oversight and transparency.”

Representatives of industry groups disagree.

“The important question here seems to be: are drinking water sources being protected? The answer is yes,” said Katie Brown, a spokesperson for Energy In Depth, a research and education program of the Independent Petroleum Association of America. She said water is pumped from the ground as part of the oil and gas production process and this “produced water” is often injected back into the same underground zones where the water came from. She said there are thorough oversight procedures in place to prevent any contamination of drinking water.

“States with primacy over their injection well programs have very rigorous programs — programs that go above and beyond what EPA requires,” Brown said in an email. She said those programs are effectively protecting drinking water. She pointed to Ohio as an example, noting the EPA recently praised the state’s regulatory program as being strong in areas ranging from permitting to inspections.

The GAO report said the EPA annually collects data from state and regional EPA regulators on the types of inspections they conduct. But the report said the information collected is not “specific enough to determine the number of different types of inspections” those agencies are supposed to be conducting each year.

The federal agency’s procedures also include collecting information on “unresolved significant violations” to determine if enforcement actions are necessary. But when government auditors looked at a sample of 93 significant violations between the federal budget years 2008 and 2013, they found that “state and EPA-managed programs did not report data on such violations completely or consistently.”

The GAO report also cited problems in California, where in recent years the EPA has not regularly reviewed permitting. In 2014, a review by California officials found that injection wells had been wrongly approved in various locations where aquifers were not exempt from the requirements of the Safe Drinking Water Act. The EPA found California’s regulatory program wasn’t meeting state and federal requirements.

As of October 2015, California officials had identified more than 500 wells injecting wastewater into 11 nonexempt aquifers “with the potential to threaten underground sources of drinking water,” the GAO report said. It noted that California had halted the reinjection of oilfield fluids into some of those wells.

The federal audit concluded that if the EPA had maintained an updated database of aquifer exemptions, the agency’s regional office “may have had the information it needed to review injection well permits to determine whether injections were being made into exempted aquifers.” It said that if there had been on-site evaluations, the EPA might also have discovered sooner that California’s program wasn’t meeting state and federal requirements.

Among the specific steps GAO recommended in its report:

- Collect well-specific data on inspections;
- Complete a database of aquifers that have been exempted from protections under the Safe Drinking Water Act;
- Clarify the agency’s instructions to regulators on the data they report on forms;
- Carry out an analysis to determine the staff and other resources needed to adequately carry out oversight.

EPA spokesperson Julia Valentine said in an email that the agency “acknowledges that oversight and data management are two long-term challenges.”

“The agency is in the process of modernizing EPA’s well-specific data collection and focusing its oversight resources on priority risks to public health,” Valentine said.

As for the specific recommendations, Valentine said “the agency disagrees with GAO’s assessment that EPA is

deficient in its duties to maintain aquifer exemption records.” She said that regional offices hold the most comprehensive data on requests and approvals of aquifer exemption requests, and that the agency’s headquarters is collecting “selected data from the regions on approved aquifer exemptions throughout the nation, to develop a national data set.”

Adam Peltz, an attorney with the Environmental Defense Fund in New York, pointed out the report did not say states and the federal government are doing a bad job that’s leading to pollution of drinking water. States actually appear to be doing a pretty good job of administering the “underground injection control” programs, Peltz said.

“One of the reasons why the EPA has fallen short on some of its statutory duties is that it doesn’t have enough funding for this program to really fully do the inspections of the states’ programs on as frequent of a basis as it probably should,” he said.

“But there are some key areas where more cooperation and more thoughtful cooperation and information sharing would make a big difference,” Peltz said. “The decision to grant an aquifer exemption should be made clear-eyed with all available information, and then that decision should be properly recorded so that it’s accessible to everyone.”

Peltz said the review should help prod the EPA and state agencies to make necessary improvements. Officials at both the state and federal level, he said, realize that they have work to do.

Opponents of fracking say federal leadership is needed to protect drinking water against pollution.

Adam Briggie of the group Denton Drilling Awareness in Texas said the EPA should step in and protect drinking water because the state regulator, the Texas Railroad Commission, is so lax. Denton, a Dallas-area community, in 2014 passed a fracking ban, only to reverse itself a year later after the Texas Legislature passed a law rendering it unenforceable.

“When we have a community that is concerned about the quality of their water, we pretty much have to pass the hat around to get it tested,” Briggie said. “There’s an extreme regulatory void.”

Marty Schladen of the El Paso Times contributed to this report.

Annual Waste Inventory Finds Government Has Money — And Ammo — To Burn

By Gregory Korte

[USA Today](#), April 12, 2016

WASHINGTON — The Department of Defense spends \$118 million a year to stockpile and destroy conventional ammunition — ammunition that could instead be transferred to other federal, state and local government agencies who could use it.

The Internal Revenue Service has nine different referral programs to allow people to provide information about tax evasion — but those programs rarely share information and do a poor job protecting and rewarding whistleblowers.

And federal agencies have a combined \$870 billion of “unobligated” balances in their accounts — money that’s providing a financial cushion for agencies instead of being put to use on programs.

Those are just three examples from the Government Accountability Office’s annual list of fragmented, overlapping or duplicative programs to be released to Congress Wednesday.

The report, now in its sixth year, is the successor to former Sen. Tom Coburn’s “Duplication Nation” reports and have helped the federal government identify \$125 billion in savings to taxpayers over 15 years. But the congressional accounting agency says the government could save billions more if Congress and the executive branch follow through on its list of 296 pending recommendations.

House Oversight Committee Chairman Jason Chaffetz, R-Utah, said he’s worried that reform isn’t moving quickly enough.

“Why do we need to come back, year after year, to discuss the same, unimplemented recommendations?” he said in a statement prepared for a committee hearing on the report Wednesday. “Disagreements over policy can lead to disagreements over appropriate spending, but the imperative to prevent waste is something we can all agree on.”

Who’s to blame for the slow pace of progress? The report says there are 243 recommendations that the Obama administration has not yet fully addressed, and 27 others still pending in Congress. The administration has fully addressed 43% of its recommendations, while Congress only 32%.

Agencies say they’re working on the recommendations.

- Internal Revenue Service spokesman Matthew Leas said the IRS is working to coordinate its nine different whistleblower and referral programs, “including creating a single form and a single point of contact for referrals.”

“We appreciate GAO’s insight on this topic, and we agree with their recommendations,” he said.

- The Department of Defense also agreed to keep better track of its excess ammunition and share that information with other government agencies that could use it, instead of automatically burning or exploding it. But the Pentagon also noted that there are a number of environmental and procurement laws — not to mention treaty obligations — that complicate its ability to dispose and transfer ammunition.

- And the Energy and State departments, which have had some of the highest balances in their accounts, said they’re working on better managing their money. (But the State Department, which had 72% more in Passport Security

Surcharge fund than it could spend in a year, disputed the GAO's claim that the balance was "excessive.")

At the White House Tuesday, Press Secretary Josh Earnest said the Obama administration "certainly has made important strides in reducing the waste from government spending."

But he said Congress too often stands in the way of spending reforms, particularly at the Department of Defense. "Oftentimes our efforts are set back by Congress continuing to fund the programs and specific government actions ... that we believe are no longer necessary," he said. "There certainly is more that can be saved in terms of government spending, but the president has been serious about a commitment to be a good steward of taxpayer dollars."

Regulators Warn About Too Much Defense Industry Consolidation

By Renae Merle

[Washington Post](#), April 12, 2016

Federal regulators on Tuesday issued an unusual warning about the perils of defense industry consolidation, noting the importance of competition to keeping prices down.

"Many sectors of the defense industry are already highly concentrated. Others appear to be on a similar trajectory," according to a joint statement from the Justice Department and Federal Trade Commission, which must approve large proposed mergers or acquisitions.

"If a transaction threatens to harm innovation, reduce the number of competitive options needed by [the Department of Defense], or otherwise lessen competition ... [regulators] will not hesitate to take appropriate enforcement action."

The statement did not mention any specific companies or potential mergers and follows similar statements last year from Frank Kendall, the Pentagon's chief weapons buyer. At the time, Kendall said his concern was sparked in part by Lockheed Martin's acquisition of Sikorsky, a leading military helicopter manufacturer. Bethesda-based Lockheed is the world's largest defense contractor and the Sikorsky deal made it even bigger.

"The Department of Justice is committed to preserving competition for current and future defense procurement," Bill Baer, the head of the Justice Department's antitrust division, said in a statement. "In light of recent speculation about possible future consolidation, we thought it timely to reinforce that message."

Government spending on defense has slowed sharply since the recession, hitting contractors hardest as the Pentagon has focused on shielding its military personnel and war-fighting accounts from significant cuts. That has forced the defense industry to make wrenching choices. Some have gone looking for business overseas or in the commercial

sector. Others have broken themselves up and sold parts. Some have merged.

Many of the biggest defense giants have seen profits improve in the past year or so after years after a series of job cuts and realignments. But defense industry officials have continued to downplay concerns about too much industry consolidation, arguing that the slowdown in Pentagon spending made some deals necessary.

"The main reason defense companies are getting together is that spending on military hardware has been depressed for years," Loren Thompson, a defense consultant with the Lexington Institute, said in an email.

"Not only is the Pentagon budget capped, but the Obama Administration has made weapons programs a bill-payer for other types of Pentagon spending like personnel and readiness."

Obama Admin. Snubs Medal Of Honor Recipients, Names Warships After Liberal Politicians

By Rowan Scarborough

[Washington Times](#), April 12, 2016

As the Obama administration this week named another warship after a politician, a new report is circulating in Congress that shows that nearly 200 Navy and Marine Corps Medal of Honor recipients have never been awarded such an honor, contrary to naval guidelines and tradition.

Navy Secretary Ray Mabus, who has named several ships after Democrats and liberal activists not connected to the military, was in Detroit on Monday to announce that an Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer will be named the USS Carl M. Levin. The Michigan Democrat served 31 years in the Senate and chaired the Senate Armed Services Committee from 2007 to 2015.

The move has rankled some Republicans. They note privately the long list of war heroes yet to be so honored and the Navy's own tradition of naming destroyers after deceased Medal of Honor recipients and other combat heroes, as well as admirals and generals who played significant roles in naval warfare.

Mr. Levin did not serve in the military.

In a new report privately delivered to lawmakers, the Congressional Research Service did an extensive examination this winter and found that, of 318 Medal of Honor recipients in the Navy and Marine Corps, 100 have had a ship named after them; the large majority of them — 186 — have not.

One congressional staffer noted that Mr. Levin presided over the committee during the Obama administration's major drawdown of troops and weapons systems. Joint Chiefs of Staff officers testified in recent months that they doubt they

can fight one major war on the schedule outlined in the National Military Strategy.

The Levin naming did not conform to Mr. Mabus' own guidelines set out in a report to Congress in 2012 called "Policies and Practices of the U.S. Navy for Naming the Vessels of the Navy."

Congress demanded the accounting after Mr. Mabus had strayed from tradition on several warship namesakes.

The Navy report said its guideline calls for naming destroyers after deceased Navy and Marine Corps veterans and Navy secretaries. A number of destroyers in the Arleigh Burke class are named after Medal of Honor recipients.

The report lists three exceptions for destroyers — the Winston Churchill, the Roosevelt and the Lyndon Johnson. Johnson was a Navy officer in World War II. The Roosevelt is named after Franklin Roosevelt, who was a Navy assistant secretary and proponent of a big Navy, and first lady Eleanor Roosevelt.

Capt. Patrick McNally, Mr. Mabus' spokesman, told The Washington Times: "He names ships for American heroes and considers Senator Levin's long commitment to the nation worthy of recognition. The naming conventions are guidelines set by the secretary. He can deviate from them if he desires."

Capt. McNally said Mr. Mabus has named a number of destroyers after Medal of Honor recipients. They include the Ralph Johnson, the Thomas Hudner, the Harvey Barnum and the Daniel Inouye, the late Democratic senator from Hawaii.

Mr. Mabus announced in January that an Expeditionary Sea Base will carry the name of Hershel "Woody" Williams, a World War II Medal of Honor recipient.

Other Senate Armed Services chairmen have been so honored for other ship classes.

The George W. Bush administration named a Virginia-class attack submarine after former Sen. John Warner, who also served as a Marine enlisted man in World War II and as a Navy secretary.

Democrat John C. Stennis of Mississippi, a legendary defense hawk, has an aircraft carrier in his name.

Democrat Richard B. Russell of Georgia championed defense spending as Armed Services chairman. Like Mr. Warner, his name is on an attack submarine.

In the House, the late Democratic congressman Carl Vinson has his name on an aircraft carrier because of his championing a large, "blue water" Navy able to operate in all oceans.

"Carl Levin is no Carl Vinson, Richard Russell or John Stennis," said a congressional defense staffer. "He has presided over the dismantlement of the U.S. military, which is an accomplishment for the Obama administration."

Mr. Mabus, a former Democratic governor of Mississippi, has irked some Republicans for veering from

tradition by naming warships after social activists and politicians with no link to the military.

Since the start of the Obama administration, Mr. Mabus has named combat logistics supply ships after civil rights leader Medgar Evers and leftist farmworker Cesar Chavez.

All previous Lewis and Clark-class cargo ships had been named for famous explorers or people who made significant contributions to the military, as called for in Navy conventions.

He named a littoral combat ship after former Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, Arizona Democrat, who was seriously wounded in a January 2011 assassination attempt.

He named a San Diego-class docking ship after another Democrat, the late Rep. John P. Murtha of Pennsylvania. The previous nine ships had been named after U.S. cities, a park and a county, following Navy conventions.

Mr. Murtha was a Marine in Vietnam and supported the defense budget. He angered the Marine community in 2005 when he charged that Marines had killed civilians "in cold blood" in the Iraqi village of Haditha.

In January Mr. Mabus again broke with past tradition. He named a fleet replenishment oiler, TAO-205, after civil rights icon Rep. John Lewis, George Democrat. Mr. Lewis voted for removing all U.S. troops from Iraq in 2007 and from Afghanistan in 2011.

Navy guidelines had said such ships are named for rivers or people instrumental to maritime and aviation design and production.

But Mr. Mabus changed the convention last year, saying the 17 oilers will be named after civil and human rights activists.

The 2012 Navy report to Congress stated: "The foregoing discussion helps preview one of the central themes of this report: US Navy ship naming policies, practices, and 'traditions' are not fixed; they evolve constantly over time."

The Navy report also defended Mr. Mabus' decision-making.

For example, it defended the naming of the Gabrielle Giffords: "Secretary Mabus was well aware that Congresswoman Giffords is much younger than those Members of Congress previously so honored and, as a result, her record does not equal theirs in numbers of years served or in the general level of attention applied to military or naval matters. He also knows from many visits to hospitals that hundreds of young service men and women have received wounds as grievous as Ms. Giffords's, and agrees they all rightfully deserve respect and recognition. However, given the extraordinary circumstances surrounding this case, he felt it both fitting and appropriate to exercise his discretion — established by the very first Secretary of the Navy over 210 years ago — to make an exception to a ship naming convention to honor Congresswoman Giffords."

In an August 2009 ceremony to name a destroyer after Marine Cpl. Jason Dunham, a posthumous Medal of Honor recipient for valor in Iraq, Mr. Mabus talked of the importance of a warship carrying a hero's identity.

"Today, Jason takes his rightful place in naval history alongside his storied legacy in the annals of the Marine Corps," he said. "Though Jason is no longer with us, his name will live on in this magnificent warship that represents the best our nation has to offer.

"Jason's spirit — as a warrior, fighter and one who never gave up, even in the face of great challenges — lives on to lead all of the men and women who will ever serve aboard USS Jason Dunham, in home waters and abroad. In the fighting spirit of its namesake, the men and women of USS Jason Dunham will never back down from any challenge put before them."

Documents Undercut U.S. Case For Taking Mortgage Giant Fannie Mae's Profits

[New York Times](#), April 13, 2016

On a Friday in August 2012, the federal government changed the terms of its bailout of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, sending all the mortgage finance giants' profits to the Treasury. The surprise decision prompted a lawsuit from shareholders, who argued that the collection of profits was an improper taking of private property without compensation.

As the lawsuit proceeds through Federal Claims Court, documents unsealed in the case on Monday undermine an important defense made by the United States government. Lawyers for the Justice Department maintained early on in the litigation that Fannie and Freddie were in a death spiral and financially weak. Funneling all their profits to the Treasury was a way to protect taxpayers from future losses at the government-sponsored enterprises, the Justice Department said.

In a deposition taken last July, for example, Susan McFarland, Fannie's former chief financial officer, said she told high-level officials at the Treasury on Aug. 9, 2012, that the company was, in fact, "now in a sustainable profitability, that we would be able to deliver sustainable profits over time."

The mortgage finance giants Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac remain wards of the state years after the credit crisis receded into memory. Under their original rescue, in 2008, they were required to pay a 10 percent dividend on the money they had drawn from the Treasury.

The revised deal, under which their profits are swept every quarter into the Treasury's general fund, prompted shareholders to sue in Federal Claims Court. Fairholme Funds, a mutual fund company that owns shares in Fannie and Freddie, filed the suit in 2013.

Among the documents unsealed by Margaret M. Sweeney, the judge presiding over the litigation, are excerpts

from three depositions taken in the case by lawyers for Fairholme. Those depositions center on what the government knew about Fannie's and Freddie's financial position in 2012; this is an important question because the government had justified the taking of profits as a way to protect taxpayers who had extended bailout money to the companies.

In addition to telling Treasury officials in early August 2012 that Fannie would be able to sustain profits, Ms. McFarland said that Fannie could soon reap about \$50 billion in income because of the reversal of an accounting entry, known as a deferred tax asset, required under accounting rules when the company began earning profits again.

A copy of the presentation that Ms. McFarland made to the Treasury was also unsealed. It contains 10 years of internal financial projections from Fannie, indicating that the company would not require further assistance from taxpayers.

A little over a week after her meeting with the officials, the Treasury announced the profit plan with the Federal Housing Finance Agency, the overseer of Fannie and Freddie.

In her deposition, Ms. McFarland said that she believed her conversation with the Treasury propelled the government to change the terms of the bailout to seize Fannie's and Freddie's profits. "When the amendment went into place," Ms. McFarland testified, "part of my reaction was they did that in response to my communication of our forecasts and the implication of those forecasts, that it was probably a desire not to allow capital to build up within the enterprises and not to allow the enterprises to recapitalize themselves."

A spokeswoman for the Justice Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The unsealing of the documents casts a spotlight on a legal proceeding that has been shrouded in secrecy from the start. The court granted the government's request for confidential treatment of thousands of pages of materials produced in the case; Justice Department lawyers have asserted presidential privilege in 45 documents.

Last year, The New York Times filed an amicus curiae brief asking that the judge unseal two of the depositions in the case. She released excerpts from one of those depositions on Monday.

Further testimony unsealed on Monday came from Mario Ugoletti, a former Treasury official who was a former special adviser to the director of the Federal Housing Finance Agency, the conservator overseeing Fannie and Freddie. In December 2013, Mr. Ugoletti signed an affidavit for the case stating unequivocally that neither the Treasury nor the Federal Housing Finance Agency envisioned that the companies' deferred tax assets were about to be reversed in the months leading up to the profit sweep, generating huge profits. He also said that the move was not intended to "increase compensation to Treasury."

But in the deposition in May, Mr. Ugoletti said he did not know whether the Treasury or the Federal Housing Finance Agency officials knew about the potential for the profits at Fannie and Freddie at the time of the sweep.

Mr. Ugoletti, who left government in the fall could not be reached for comment.

A document produced by Grant Thornton, the accounting firm hired by the government to do financial analysis on the companies, casts additional doubt on the government's contention that it considered Fannie and Freddie to be in a dire financial condition in 2012, when it changed the terms of the bailout. The document, unsealed on Monday, shows Freddie's financial results through the first quarter of 2012 alongside handwritten notes from an unknown Grant Thornton employee. That employee noted how Freddie's profits would require that it reverse the accounting entry, known as releasing the valuation allowance.

The notes on the document state: "3 yrs. of cum. profits, you start to think about releasing the valuation allow. The valuation allow. When probably 2013, 2014."

Since Fannie and Freddie returned to profitability in 2012, they have sent to the Treasury more than \$50 billion over the amount they drew down in the bailout. Their profits continue to be funneled to the Treasury each quarter. Continue reading the main story

Regulators Set To Reject Some Big Banks' 'Living Wills'

J.P. Morgan, other firms to receive not credible verdict from Fed, FDIC

By Ryan Tracy

[Wall Street Journal](#), April 12, 2016

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The Fed Fights Itself Over GDP Data

The race to provide credible real-time data on U.S. economic growth is pitting the Federal Reserve Bank of New York against its sibling in Atlanta, to the puzzlement of some traders

By Katy Burne, Ben Eisen And Paul Vigna

[Wall Street Journal](#), April 12, 2016

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

US Stocks Rise Broadly, Led By Gains In The Energy Sector

[Associated Press](#), April 12, 2016

NEW YORK — Stocks posted solid gains on Tuesday, led by energy companies after news reports said Saudi Arabia and Russia were working toward an agreement to cut

oil production. Investors also worked through the initial batch of earnings from the first quarter of the year.

The Dow Jones industrial average rose 164.84 points, or 0.9 percent, to 17,721.25. The Standard & Poor's 500 index climbed 19.73 points, or 1 percent, to 2,061.72 and the Nasdaq composite increased 38.69 points, or 0.8 percent, to 4,872.09.

Corporate earnings got underway on a weak note after Alcoa, the aluminum mining giant, reported a 15 percent decline in revenue late Monday. Alcoa also had a huge drop in first-quarter profit from a year earlier as aluminum prices fell. Alcoa's stock fell 26 cents, or 2.7 percent, to \$9.48.

Later this week big U.S. banks will start releasing their results, including JPMorgan Chase, Citigroup and Wells Fargo. Investors will be watching the banks to see how well they've weathered the market's recent volatility and low oil prices earlier this year. Banks are often seen as a proxy for how the U.S. economy is doing.

"It's not going to be a clean earnings season for financials at all," said Peter Stournaras, a portfolio manager at BlackRock. "The banks have suffered from fears about oil loans, but those fears are overblown."

Expectations for earnings are low this quarter. Analysts surveyed by FactSet expect corporate profits to be down 9.1 percent from a year ago, hurt primarily by the steep drop in oil prices and other commodities. The entire energy sector is expected to report a loss this quarter, according to FactSet.

"Earnings will paint an important picture over the next few weeks, but the more important story is the continued improvement in the macroeconomic environment here in the U.S. and globally," said Ryan Larson, head of U.S. equity trading at RBC Global Asset Management in Chicago.

Oil prices moved sharply higher after Russian officials told Interfax, the Russian news agency, that they planned to reach a deal with Saudi Arabia to cut oil production. OPEC ministers meet this Sunday in Doha, Qatar.

Benchmark U.S. crude oil climbed \$1.81, or 4.5 percent, at \$42.17 a barrel in New York. Brent crude, the international standard, rose \$1.86 to \$44.69 a barrel in London.

Energy stocks, which have been beaten down in recent months, followed the price of crude oil higher. The energy component of the S&P 500 jumped almost 3 percent.

U.S. government bond prices fell. The yield on the 10-year Treasury note rose to 1.77 percent from 1.73 percent late Monday. The euro fell to \$1.1397 from \$1.1412 while the dollar rose to 108.53 yen from 107.94 yen.

In other energy commodities, heating oil rose 6 cents to \$1.276 a gallon, wholesale gasoline rose 3 cents to \$1.534 a gallon and natural gas rose 9 cents to \$2.004 per thousand cubic feet.

Precious and industrial metals prices closed broadly higher. Gold gained \$2.90 to \$1,260.90 an ounce, silver rose

25 cents to \$16.22 an ounce and copper climbed six cents to \$2.15 a pound. Continue reading the main story

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Oil Rises To Highest Level Since November On Hopes For Output Freeze

Major producers to meet Sunday in Qatar, though some doubt any real impact

By Nicole Friedman

[Wall Street Journal](#), April 12, 2016

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

In Wyoming, Hard Times Return As Energy Prices Slump

[New York Times](#), April 13, 2016

WRIGHT, Wyo. — For 17 years, Scott Pearce worked as a mechanic here in the Powder River Basin, a Saudi Arabia of Western coal deposits. But about a week ago he became a casualty of the declining local economy, one of nearly 500 people laid off from the Black Thunder and North Antelope Rochelle mines. It was among the latest and worst round of job losses to hit Wyoming.

Somewhere else, the American economy is posting steady gains and adding jobs. But here in the nation's least populated state, the recession is slinking back.

Hard times have come crashing back on energy-reliant towns like this one in northern Wyoming, where lives and fortunes hinge on the coal, oil and gas buried beneath the rolling plains.

Tumbling prices for oil and gas, along with bankruptcies in the coal industry, have pummeled Wyoming's energy-dependent economy and eroded a thin safety net for poor and older residents. Energy development helped Wyoming weather the nation's thin years seven or eight years ago, but now officials estimate that energy companies have shed some 5,500 jobs — a huge number in a state with 580,000 residents.

A church in Gillette, about 40 miles north, held a prayer vigil for laid-off miners last week, and state officials were scrambling to find them seasonal work with state parks or jobs as prison guards. But U-Haul vans and trailers are already starting to carry people away from Wright, a town of 1,800 that sprouted up in the 1980s to serve the mines. Mr. Pearce, 52, is leaving for Alaska, to chase work with his brother in the gold mines.

"I'll have to turn my house back in to the bank. We're not going to be able to sell," he said one afternoon last week, as he watched television at a friend's electronics shop. "This is a sinking ship."

Bankruptcies in the coal industry and a slowdown in oil drilling have sown economic pain and budget shortfalls from Appalachia to Alaska, but the effects have been especially concentrated in Wyoming.

The state's unemployment rate has climbed by 1.2 percentage points over the past year, more than in any other state. While Wyoming's overall jobless rate is about even with the national average of 5 percent, the layoffs in mining country have created pockets of a new recession, raising fears that rural economies out here are veering away from the rest of the country's economic progress.

"It is, no question, a hard time for the state," Gov. Matt Mead said in a telephone interview. "As difficult as it is now, I think it can get worse. If these people pack up and leave, the local restaurant won't even get that occasional business. It's heartbreaking to see."

The layoffs have forced an economic reckoning in a state where oil, gas, coal and uranium provide 60 to 70 percent of revenues. Tourists and second-home buyers are still flocking to Jackson Hole, wind turbines are blooming along the plains, and Microsoft is expanding a data center in Cheyenne. But those pale in comparison with the shadow that energy extraction — much of it on federal lands — casts across the economy.

"We've got to diversify the economy," Mr. Mead said.

Falling tax revenue forced deep budget cuts this year and prompted lawmakers to draw \$180 million from the state's rainy-day fund. The budget crunch also intensified a debate within the Republican-dominated state government over whether to expand Medicaid under President Obama's health care law.

Mr. Mead, a Republican, opposed the Affordable Care Act, but in 2014 started urging the Republican-controlled State Legislature to accept the Medicaid expansion, saying it would bring in about \$268 million in federal dollars and cover about 20,000 low-income people. But the Legislature balked, saying it would force Wyoming to shoulder a huge government expansion with an unknown price tag down the line.

"We care about our people," said Phil Nicholas, the State Senate president. "But we also believe you can create problems by creating straight-out entitlements without any obligation or effort to improve your situation."

Democrats said the budget cuts and Medicaid rejection ended up heaping most of the pain on Wyoming's poor. A literacy program that helped people get high-school equivalency degrees was eliminated, as were programs that provided dental care and property-tax rebates to low-income old people.

Mary Throne, the Democratic minority floor leader in the State House of Representatives, said the Medicaid expansion could have helped the families of laid-off miners.

"As people lose benefits and they don't have access to health insurance, we're going to need a safety net," she said. "We made very bad choices. We panicked. And we really should have been thoughtful and deliberate."

If jobs are scarce around here, blame is not. Some conservative lawmakers and laid-off workers seethed at the Obama administration's carbon regulations and its halt on coal leasing on public lands. But others said that coal was struggling to compete against cheap, plentiful natural gas, and that oil and gas drilling would rebound once prices did.

In Casper, Eric Kraft, 30, sat down at a computer terminal at a packed work-force resource center and started filling out a résumé. He said he had been a month shy of his 10th year at the Black Thunder mine when his supervisors gathered everyone in the break room and started handing out letters. Some had good news. Not his.

"Mine said they appreciated your service, and there was a bus to haul me home," Mr. Kraft said. "It was more of a relief — the biggest part of it was the waiting, knowing it's coming."

Towns like Wright are still bracing for the worst. It survived a bust in the mid-1980s just after it incorporated from an outpost of trailers into a real town. It survived a tornado that killed two people and destroyed 90 homes.

The apartment complexes in town once had waiting lists, and one of the town's biggest headaches was coping with all of the tractor-trailers parked on the streets, said Brandi Harlow, the town's economic-development coordinator. Now, Ms. Harlow said she was working to bring in experts from the community college to counsel residents on how to refinance their mortgages, navigate a job search and apply for food stamps.

The town of Wright's \$3 million budget is already down about 30 percent. And as workers in the area brace for the possibility of more layoffs, they said they were still unsure where the bottom might lie.

"Reminds me of going to a funeral," said the mayor, Ralph Kingan. "I don't know what's happening to my town."

Correction: April 12, 2016

An earlier version of a picture caption with this article misidentified the structures on the outskirts of Wright, Wyo. They are oil pumps, not oil derricks. Continue reading the main story

North Carolina Governor Clarifies Language In Controversial Bathroom Bill

By Bradford Richardson

[Washington Times](#), April 12, 2016

North Carolina Governor Pat McCrory on Tuesday issued a clarification to a law prohibiting people from using the public facilities of the opposite sex, saying he had listened to "feedback" from his constituents and was taking action to

"affirm and improve the state's commitment to privacy and equality."

The executive order does not change the main component of the legislation concerning public access to facilities, but allows the private actors to determine how to regulate their own restrooms, locker rooms and changing rooms.

"After listening to people's feedback during the last several weeks on this issue, I have come to the conclusion that there is a great deal of misinformation, misinterpretation, confusion, passion and, frankly, selective outrage and hypocrisy, especially against the great state of North Carolina," Mr. McCrory said in a video announcement accompanying the executive order. "But based on this feedback, I am taking action to affirm the state's commitment to privacy and equality."

Mr. McCrory also extended North Carolina anti-discrimination laws to cover employment discrimination on the basis of gender identity and sexual orientation. The governor said he will also instruct the legislature to revoke a prohibition on suing in state courts over discrimination.

The order came just hours after Deutsche Bank announced it was freezing a plan to create 250 new jobs at a Cary, North Carolina, software development center in response to the legislation. The office currently employs 900 North Carolinians, whom the bank said are not at risk of losing their jobs.

The German bank was just the latest blue-chip corporation to voice opposition to the North Carolina law. More than 130 CEOs, including those from Facebook, Google and Apple, signed a letter to Mr. McCrory saying the law goes against their values and threatens their ability to do business in the state. And PayPal withdrew a plan to build a facility in Charlotte that would have employed 400 North Carolinians in high-skill jobs.

Several celebrities have also spoken out against the law, including singer Bruce Springsteen, who canceled a show scheduled in North Carolina in response to the legislation.

Mr. McCrory said he does not anticipate the revisions will placate some of the law's opponents, who contend it discriminates against transgender people who want to use public facilities on the basis of gender identity rather than biological sex.

Sarah Preston, who is acting executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of North Carolina, called the executive order a "poor effort to save face for his sweeping attacks on the LGBT community."

"With this executive order, LGBT individuals still lack legal protections from discrimination, and transgender people are still explicitly targeted and forced to use the wrong restroom," Ms. Preston said in a press release.

Sarah Warebelow, legal director for the Human Rights Campaign, called Mr. McCrory's actions "insufficient."

"It's absurd that he'll protect people from being fired but will prohibit them from using the employee restroom consistent with their gender identity," Ms. Warbelow said in a press release. "The North Carolina Legislature must act to right this wrong as swiftly as possible. They created this horrendous law, and they need to repeal it."

N.C. Gov's Order Backs Some Changes To Transgender Law

By Mark Barrett

[USA Today](#), April 12, 2016

ASHEVILLE, N.C. — In the face of travel bans from at least five states, 10 cities and two counties, North Carolina's governor issued an executive order Tuesday that he said restores some protections to gays in the state.

Gov. Pat McCrory's order, signed in the state capital of Raleigh, does not change North Carolina's controversial law, which he signed March 24 and became effective immediately. It prohibits counties and municipalities from passing anti-discrimination ordinances and requires transgender people to use public bathrooms and locker rooms that match their gender at birth.

Instead, the Republican who is running for re-election in November, said he is banning discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity on state government personnel decisions and wants lawmakers, who return to Raleigh for a regular session April 25, to restore the right to sue in state court if lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender people believe they have faced discrimination.

"After listening to people's feedback for the past several weeks on this issue, I have come to the conclusion that there is a great deal of misinformation, misinterpretation, confusion, a lot of passion and frankly, selective outrage and hypocrisy, especially against the great state of North Carolina," McCrory said in a press release accompanying his executive order. "Based upon this feedback, I am taking action to affirm and improve the state's commitment to privacy and equality."

It was not immediately clear whether his executive order would expire when he leaves office.

"If the governor is truly committed to non-discrimination and wants to undo the harms done by House Bill 2, this is just the beginning of the conversation," Chris Sgro, executive director of Equality North Carolina, said in a statement.

McCrory's order affirms that bathrooms in state and local government buildings will follow the new law, but the private sector can set its own policies and local governments can establish their own policies for employees. That was the case with or without McCrory's action.

Before lawmakers passed House Bill 2 in a one-day special session March 23, people who alleged that they were

discriminated against on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, age, sex or handicap could sue in either state or federal court. The law ended the ability to bring those suits in state court although those discriminated against on the basis of a handicap could rely on a different state law to sue.

McCrory said he saw no need to change the law he signed beyond repealing the state court discrimination provision.

He said his actions Tuesday "will not satisfy all the critics who have a litmus test of purity on each side of this issue. ... My job is to find a common-sense solution to where we have conflicts between privacy and between equal rights."

Lawyers who handle employment-discrimination lawsuits said the new law was a blow to those discriminated against in the workplace because it is cheaper and easier to sue in state court and state courts allow a longer period for filing suit. A state lawsuit can be filed at a county courthouse while federal cases are heard in a much smaller number of federal courthouses around the state, a potential barrier for people who live in more remote areas.

"Gov. McCrory's actions today are a poor effort to save face after his sweeping attacks on the LGBT community, and they fall far short of correcting the damage done when he signed into law the harmful House Bill 2, which stigmatizes and mandates discrimination against gay and transgender people," Sarah Preston, acting executive director of the North Carolina chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, said in a statement.

"With this executive order, LGBT individuals still lack legal protections from discrimination, and transgender people are still explicitly targeted by being forced to use the wrong restroom," she said.

North Carolina Gov. Pat McCrory makes remarks April 12, 2016, during an interview at the governor's mansion in Raleigh, N.C. (Photo: Gerry Broome, AP)

State lawmakers passed their bill after Charlotte City Council, where eight of 11 members are Democrats, passed an ordinance in February allowing transgender people to choose public bathrooms that correspond to their gender identity. Republicans have almost a two-thirds majority in both the state Senate and House.

Since the law's passage, corporations, entertainers and elected officials across the USA have lined up to condemn North Carolina.

Just hours before McCrory's executive order, Deutsche Bank announced it was stopping plans to bring 250 new jobs to its offices in Cary, N.C.

PayPal online payment company canceled plans for a \$3.6 million Charlotte operations center that would have added 400 jobs, Red | Ventures marketing firm is reconsidering expansion plans in Charlotte that could add more than 500 jobs, Braeburn Pharmaceuticals is reconsidering expansion plans in Raleigh-Durham that could

add more than 50 jobs, and the chief executive of Google's venture capital division has said no investments should be made in the state while its law is in effect.

Charlotte alone has lost 13 conventions because of the law, Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority officials said last week. Dozens of the retail and interior-design companies that attend its furniture trade show, Saturday to April 20 this year, will be no-shows, organizers of the High Point Market have said.

The NBA has said it might move its 2017 All-Star Game from Charlotte if the law is not repealed.

Lionsgate entertainment production company canceled plans to shoot the pilot episode for a comedy series in Charlotte, and Bruce Springsteen canceled his Sunday concert in Greensboro, N.C. While musician Gregg Allman said Tuesday that he was against the new law, he did not cancel his Wednesday concert in Greensboro.

And Connecticut, Minnesota, New York, Vermont and Washington state's governors have said they will not allow employees to travel to the state for training and conventions. Mayors from the District of Columbia; Atlanta; Boston; Chicago; Dayton, Ohio; New York City; San Francisco; Santa Fe, N.M.; Seattle; and West Palm Beach, Fla., have weighed in with similar restrictions as well as county executives in Cuyahoga and Summit counties in Ohio, home to Cleveland and Akron.

Several LGBT-rights groups have filed suit challenging the new law's constitutionality. North Carolina Attorney General Roy Cooper, a Democrat who is running for governor this fall, has said he will not defend the statute in court because it is discriminatory and on Tuesday called on McCrory to work to repeal the law.

"Gov. McCrory just put to rest the left's lies about HB 2 and proved it allows private and public employers, non-profits and churches the ability to adopt nondiscrimination policies that are stronger than state and federal law," said state Sen. Phil Berger, a Republican from Eden and the Senate's majority leader.

"But that fact is irrelevant to Roy Cooper and his left-wing political correctness mob with their agenda-driven allies in the liberal media, who will never stop trashing North Carolina until they achieve their goal of allowing any man into any women's bathroom or locker room at any time simply by claiming to feel like a woman," Berger said.

Contributing: The Associated Press. Follow Mark Barrett on Twitter: @MarkBarrettACT

Related:

North Carolina Governor Tries To Step Back From Bias Law

[New York Times](#), April 13, 2016

Gov. Pat McCrory of North Carolina, whose state has been the subject of withering criticism since its legislature passed a law limiting bathroom use by transgender people and eliminating anti-discrimination protections for gay and transgender people, on Tuesday retreated from his full-throated defense of the measure. But he stopped short of opposing limits on bathroom access and left other elements of the law intact.

Mr. McCrory signed the bill immediately after it was passed. But on Tuesday, he signed an executive order altering the equal employment policy for state workers to cover discrimination claims related to sexual orientation and gender identity. He said he would urge lawmakers to reverse course and allow people to bring discrimination cases in state court.

"Simply put, I have listened to the people of North Carolina, and the people of North Carolina are entitled to both privacy and equality," Mr. McCrory, a Republican who is seeking re-election this fall, said as he announced the executive order. "We can and we must achieve both of these goals."

The effects of Mr. McCrory's order are modest. The most disputed provision of the law, which limited bathroom access for transgender people, will stand.

The American Civil Liberties Union of North Carolina immediately criticized Mr. McCrory's order.

"Governor McCrory's actions today are a poor effort to save face after his sweeping attacks on the L.G.B.T. community, and they fall far short of correcting the damage done when he signed into law the harmful House Bill 2," Sarah Preston, the group's acting executive director, said in a statement on Tuesday.

Mr. McCrory is not the first lawmaker to back away, however modestly, from a law that was condemned by critics as a curb on gay rights. Last year, for example, Republican leaders in Indiana rewrote a so-called religious liberty law after a national outcry.

The North Carolina law that led to this year's firestorm created a mandatory statewide anti-discrimination policy, but it did not include specific protections based on sexual orientation or gender identity. The law, which state legislators pursued after Charlotte, the state's largest city, approved new legal protections for transgender people, prohibits people from using public bathrooms that do not match the sex listed on their birth certificates.

Mr. McCrory signed the measure into law after the General Assembly approved the legislation during a special session that lasted just one day, and his executive order came after major corporations and gay rights groups denounced North Carolina as intolerant. PayPal, the online-payment company, said that it would abandon plans for a global operations center in the state, and the National

Basketball Association suggested that it could move its 2017 All-Star Game from Charlotte.

In Charlotte, tourism officials said that organizers of at least four major events cited the law when they canceled plans to be in the city.

North Carolina has also been facing pressure from the Obama administration, which has argued that gay, lesbian and transgender people are protected by federal laws forbidding sex discrimination. A handful of federal agencies, including the Departments of Education and Transportation, have been studying whether the law makes the state ineligible for the billions of aid dollars it receives each year.

The measure is also the subject of a lawsuit, and Mr. McCrory's general election opponent, Attorney General Roy Cooper, has declined to defend the law in Federal District Court.

In his previous efforts to defend the law, Mr. McCrory argued that out-of-state interest groups and news organizations were stripping the law of its context and besmirching North Carolina's reputation.

Mr. McCrory complained of "a vicious, nationwide smear campaign." In a video message he recorded in late March, he said, "Disregarding the facts, other politicians — from the White House to mayors to state capitals and City Council members and even our attorney general — have initiated and promoted conflict to advance their political agenda and tear down our state, even if it means defying the Constitution and their oath of office." Continue reading the main story

After Backlash, North Carolina Governor Says He Wants Bathroom Law Partially Changed

By Mark Berman

[Washington Post](#), April 12, 2016

North Carolina Gov. Pat McCrory (R), responding to a backlash against the state's new law banning anti-discrimination protections for gay and transgender people, on Tuesday signed an executive order he said "expanded" the state's employment policy to include sexual orientation and gender identity.

He also said he would seek legislation restoring the right to sue for discrimination. However, McCrory stopped short of altering the bill's most high-profile provision mandating that transgender people use bathrooms that correspond only with the gender on their birth certificate.

In a videotaped message announcing the order, McCrory defended the state law as being needed to respond to what he called the "government overreach" of a Charlotte city ordinance that expanded civil rights protections for people based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Roy Cooper, the North Carolina attorney general and McCrory's gubernatorial opponent this fall, and multiple LGBT

groups criticized McCrory's order as being a half-measure that left discrimination intact.

"Governor McCrory's executive order is a day late and a veto short," Cooper, a Democrat, said in a statement. "The sweeping discrimination law he signed has already cost North Carolina hundreds of jobs and millions of dollars in revenue. I'm glad Governor McCrory has finally acknowledged the great damage his legislation has done, but he needs to do much more."

This law prompted intense backlash from LGBT groups and big businesses alike, with a host of major companies calling on the state to withdraw its proposal. The state law prohibits transgender people from using public bathrooms that don't match the gender they were assigned at birth, and it also barred local governments from extending civil rights protections to gay and transgender people.

Two major companies — PayPal last week and, earlier on Tuesday, Deutsche Bank — announced that they would call off proposed expansions in North Carolina due to the new law.

The Charlotte Chamber of Commerce offered praise for McCrory's order on Tuesday, saying they were in favor of anything that promoted the city and state "as places that promote diversity, inclusiveness and equality."

"We applaud the governor's actions today which demonstrate that North Carolina is an open and welcoming state," the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce said in a statement. "We strongly encourage the leadership and members of the General Assembly to take quick action to the governor's call to ensure citizens have the right to pursue claims of discrimination at the state level."

The American Civil Liberties Union of North Carolina and other rights groups criticized McCrory's action for leaving controversial provisions — like the requirement that people can only use public restrooms matching the gender they were assigned at birth — intact.

"Gov. McCrory's actions today are a poor effort to save face after his sweeping attacks on the LGBT community, and they fall far short of correcting the damage done when he signed into law the harmful House Bill 2, which stigmatizes and mandates discrimination against gay and transgender people," Sarah Preston, acting executive director of the ACLU of North Carolina, said in a statement.

The ACLU and other groups filed against the legislation that called it tantamount to legalized discrimination. On Tuesday, a spokesman for the ACLU said the order changes nothing and that the suit would proceed.

To be clear: only real effect of #HB2 exec order is to extend LGBT protection to state employees while refusing same to non-state employees.

— Sen. Jeff Jackson (@JeffJacksonNC) April 12, 2016

Politically, this is a big mistake for the Gov. Will be seen as a partial cave, not a stand on principle. Shots fired while in retreat. #HB2

— Sen. Jeff Jackson (@JeffJacksonNC) April 12, 2016

McCrory said in his video announcement that his executive order “maintains common sense gender-specific restroom and locker facilities in government buildings and in our schools,” but said that private businesses could continue to set their own rules for bathrooms and locker rooms.

(In an earlier version of this post, we noted that McCrory’s executive order said businesses could decide their own bathroom policy, which was already the language of the bill and something McCrory was just affirming rather than changing. Incorrect earlier text here.)

McCrory also said he would seek legislation in a coming short legislative session that would reinstate the right to sue for discrimination in state courts.

Sarah Warbelow, legal director for the Human Rights Campaign, said McCrory’s order “really doesn’t do much of anything.”

“I think the governor has misunderstood what the opposition to this bill was all about,” Warbelow said in a telephone interview Tuesday. “He doesn’t seem to understand that businesses, performers...are deeply concerned about the discrimination against transgender people, that they’re deeply concerned that if they are asking their employees to move to this state, that it puts either the employee or the employee’s family in a really tenuous situation.”

McCrory’s announcement comes as the controversial law, signed by McCrory last month, has already cost the state hundreds of jobs. PayPal announced last week it would scrap a new facility in Charlotte due to the law, and Deutsche Bank said Tuesday it was calling off an expansion in the state for the same reason.

The financial giant said its decision was specifically due to the new state law, which prohibits transgender people from using bathrooms that differ from the genders on their birth certificates.

“We take our commitment to building inclusive work environments seriously,” John Cryan, co-chief executive of Deutsche Bank, said in a statement Tuesday.

Even as Deutsche Bank became the second major company to scrap a planned expansion in North Carolina due to the law, a tourism agency in Raleigh said that the legislation could also wind up costing the region millions of dollars in canceled events.

Deutsche Bank had announced plans to add the new jobs through an expansion at a software application development center in Cary, N.C., about 11 miles away from the state capital in Raleigh. The center already employs 900 people, according to the bank.

When this expansion was announced, Gov. Pat McCrory (R) released a statement saying that North Carolina’s “IT talent, competitive costs, great quality of life and convenient proximity by air to New York City will continue to help foster the growth and success of pioneering businesses like” Deutsche Bank.

State officials said that the Deutsche Bank expansion would have employed enough people for the combined payroll of these new jobs to be worth more than \$21 million before benefits. The company would have been eligible for reimbursements after creating jobs.

“We’re proud of our operations and employees in Cary and regret that as a result of this legislation we are unwilling to include North Carolina in our U.S. expansion plans for now,” Cryan said. “We very much hope that we can re-visit our plans to grow this location in the near future.”

Deutsche Bank’s announcement comes a week after PayPal, an online payments firm based in California, said the new legislation prompted it to cancel a planned expansion into North Carolina. The proposed facility in Charlotte was expected to employ 400 people and bring millions of dollars to the local economy, according to McCrory’s office.

Last week, Bruce Springsteen also announced that he was canceling a show in Greensboro, N.C., to “show solidarity for those freedom fighters” contesting the new law.

The North Carolina law was hastily introduced by lawmakers and signed by McCrory, who has defended it against criticism by saying it “provided protection of our basic expectation of privacy in public restrooms and locker rooms.” Supporters of the legislation have defended it and similar bills in other states as necessary measures.

The law has come under consistent fire from LGBT rights groups and major companies including Apple, Google and American Airlines. It could also potentially cost the state major events like the next NBA All-Star game, currently scheduled to be held in Charlotte.

Officials in the state are already reporting tourism losses due to the law. As of this week, five groups canceled events planned in the Wake County region, which would have brought the local economy more than \$732,000, according to the Greater Raleigh Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Another 16 groups were about to sign contracts to hold events and are considering canceling or changing their minds, according to a spokesman for the visitors bureau. These groups could bring a combined 73,000 people and \$24 million to the region.

The visitors bureau did not identify these 16 other groups in a report released by Denny Edwards, president and chief executive of the visitors bureau. But the report did say that one of the biggest hits would come if Raleigh lost its chance to host an unspecified sports tournament, one that the bureau said could bring in \$4.5 million to the local economy.

Further reading:

What the fights over these laws mean for the GOP

Mississippi's governor signed a law allowing businesses to refuse service to gay people

This developing story has been updated and will continue to be updated.

N.C. Governor Signs Executive Order In Face Of Pushback Against Controversial Bill

By Maegan Smith

[McClatchy](#), April 12, 2016

North Carolina Governor Pat McCrory has signed an executive order that seeks to restore the right to sue over discrimination, but won't challenge controversial bathroom rule.

According to a statement released by the governor, Executive Order 93 "clarifies existing state law and provides new protections for North Carolina residents."

Executive Order 93 does the following, according to the statement:

Maintains common sense gender-specific restroom and locker room facilities in government buildings and schools

Affirms the private sector's right to establish its own restroom and locker room policies

Affirms the private sector and local governments' right to establish non-discrimination employment policies for its own employees

Expands the state's employment policy for state employees to cover sexual orientation and gender identity

Seeks legislation to reinstate the right to sue in state court for discrimination

"After listening to people's feedback for the past several weeks on this issue, I have come to the conclusion that there is a great deal of misinformation, misinterpretation, confusion, a lot of passion and frankly, selective outrage and hypocrisy, especially against the great state of North Carolina," said McCrory in the statement. "Based upon this feedback, I am taking action to affirm and improve the state's commitment to privacy and equality."

The report will be updated.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

North Carolina Gov. Pat McCrory Vows To Revise Transgender Law

Move comes after some corporations dropped plans to invest in state in protest

By Valerie Bauerlein And Jon Kamp

[Wall Street Journal](#), April 12, 2016

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Bigotry Raises Its Hideous Head In North Carolina

By Kathleen Parker

[Washington Post](#), April 12, 2016

EASTON, Md.

It's been a long while since South Carolina could look down upon its neighbor to the North.

Thanks to North Carolina's anti-LGBT legislation (HB2), also referred to as the "bathroom bill," the state effectively has begun redefining itself from its long-popular characterization as a "vale of humility between two mountains of conceit" (South Carolina and Virginia).

The new law, which ludicrously requires transgender people to use the restroom consistent with the sex on their birth certificates, has liberated South Carolina from its persistent place as the brunt of late-night jokes. Remarking on the law, South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley (R) said her state doesn't have "that problem." Brava.

The law in question was hurriedly passed last month and signed by North Carolina Gov. Pat McCrory (R) in response to what one state official called a restroom free-for-all, referring to sudden hysteria over the possibility of transgender individuals using the "wrong" restroom. How would anyone know? Will officials now post monitors at public restrooms to check birth certificates and human bladder-evacuation portals?

This would be riotously funny if it weren't so patently discriminatory.

Many bad deeds go unpunished, but not this one. The economic fallout from the law already is being felt and the price of not doing business is about to go up. Bruce Springsteen recently canceled a concert in Greensboro and Deutsche Bank has frozen a planned 250-job expansion in the state. But the real showdown will be this weekend when not nearly as many buyers and designers as usual will attend the biannual High Point furniture market — the largest in the nation and the state's biggest economic event.

A study by Duke University placed the annual economic impact of the High Point market at \$5.39 billion. The furnishings industry also generates more than 600,000 visitor days to the state each year and accounts for 37,000 jobs.

If there were a Darwin Award for states, North Carolina would win hands-down. Already the High Point Market Authority reports that hundreds or thousands of the 75,000 retailers and designers who annually attend the market won't be visiting this year because of HB2, which, come to think of it, sounds appropriately like a disease.

Many of those who plan to attend have expressed deep reservations amid likely plans to go to the relatively new Las Vegas furniture market next go-round. Among these is Don Wooters, interior designer and co-owner of Easton's Dwelling

and Design, who told me he feels guilt about going to North Carolina.

"I feel like a traitor going to High Point, putting capitalism before human rights," he said. "I don't feel good about that, and I know it's wrong."

Wooters isn't only baffled by the bigotry of the legislation but also by whatever generates the fear behind it.

"Why do people feel they have to be afraid? It's a big sign of how uneducated America is."

Another local designer, Jamie Merida, owner of Bountiful, told me he decided to go if only to make his case to vendors that they have six months to straighten out this mess or he, too, will be off to Las Vegas next time.

Although North Carolina has been noted in recent years for its increasingly hard-right politics, it is still shocking that a state that boasts several of the nation's top colleges and universities and is home to the famed Research Triangle, could codify what is so plainly a discriminatory law. In comments Tuesday, McCrory, feeling the pressure, softened his defense of the law but stopped short of opposing the provision on bathroom use by transsexual people.

As in all other times when bigotry raises its hideous head, better angels will prevail. Either the courts will overturn the law or the state will come to its senses, if only for economic reasons.

As to that valley of humility? In 1900, when Mary Oates Spratt Van Landingham, a cultural leader and author, first conjured the image in a speech, she was bemoaning her state's then-lesser "native literature."

"Could it be that being located between Virginia and South Carolina, our people for so long have been furnished such conspicuous illustrations of self-appreciation that they have, by contrast, learned modesty and silence?" she said. "Where there are mountains of conceit, there are apt to be valleys of humility."

Today, those mountains have good reason for self-appreciation by comparison. And North Carolina has proved itself a valley of ignorance, whose legislators and governor could use a moment of silence to consider their ill-conceived conceit.

Read more from Kathleen Parker's archive, follow her on Twitter or find her on Facebook.

Read more about this topic:

The Post's View: Turning back time

The Post's View: North Carolina's rush to bigotry

Cost Of A Tenn. Transgender-bathroom Bill Could Be \$1.5B

By Joel Ebert

[USA Today](#), April 12, 2016

NASHVILLE — A Tennessee bill that would require students to use a restroom that matches their sex at birth

would put the state in jeopardy of losing federal money, the state's attorney general has concluded.

The five-paragraph bill, which has seen new life in the Tennessee General Assembly in the past week, is not as far reaching as the transgender-bathroom law that North Carolina Gov. Pat McCrory enacted March 24. North Carolina also restricts cities and counties from passing ordinances that prohibit discrimination against gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people.

The problem as Tennessee's Republican attorney general, Herbert Slatery, sees it is the federal government's interpretation of U.S. law that prohibits discrimination based on sex.

"As things currently stand, we must, as a practical matter, assume that HB 2414 would violate Title IX, because the enforcer of Title IX has clearly interpreted — and enforced — Title IX to prohibit as 'discriminatory on the basis of sex' what H.B. 2414 is designed to accomplish," Slatery said in an opinion issued Monday.

A revised fiscal note attached to the bill Tuesday cites a potential loss of \$300 million in tax revenue and as much as \$1.2 billion in federal Title IX money if it were passed.

Lawmakers already have passed another religion-based bill, declaring the Bible to be the state's official book, that is sitting on Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam's desk. Haslam has until April 19 to decide to sign it, veto it or let it become state law — potentially the first across the USA to dub the Bible the state book.

Last year, Slatery issued an opinion on a similar bill that lawmakers did not pass suggesting the measure would violate separation of church and state provisions in both the state and federal constitutions.

"Common sense compels the conclusion that designation of the Bible as the official state book in practice and effect conveys a message of endorsement," he wrote then.

Republicans dominate Tennessee's state House and Senate, and Haslam, whose family started Pilot Flying J Travel Centers, also is a Republican.

The party is facing tensions both nationally and across the state between conservatives who want stronger stands on social issues and business interests who are mindful of the economic effects of such decisions. Haslam has not said how he will act on the Bible bill nor how he would act if the transgender-bathroom bill were to land on his desk.

Proponents of the transgender-bathroom bill, including the Alliance for Defending Freedom and the Family Action Council, say it is necessary to protect students' privacy. Opponents, such as the American Civil Liberties Union of Tennessee and the Human Rights Campaign, argue it is discriminatory.

State Rep. Mike Stewart, a Nashville Democrat, called Slatery's bathroom-bill opinion the "final nail in the coffin" for that legislation.

On Tuesday, the measure's sponsor in the state Senate, Republican Mike Bell of Riceville, Tenn., told the Senate Finance Ways and Means Committee that he wanted another day to digest Slatery's opinion before proceeding with the bill.

Artists, entertainment companies, the tourism industry and Nashville Mayor Megan Barry are among those who have come out in opposition to the bill. Conservative groups have backed the bill.

"The fact that the attorney general has recognized that this will result in significantly reduced federal funds for the state of Tennessee should put an end to the discussion about this bill," Stewart said.

By taking up a bathroom bill, Tennessee legislators joined several other states including Illinois, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota and South Carolina in considering regulations that could put them in the firing line of boycotts and lawsuits.

"The administration is firmly committed to promoting and defending (the) equal rights of all Americans, including LGBT Americans," White House press secretary Josh Earnest said Tuesday, citing Tennessee's bill specifically. "Specific laws like this that seek to target and marginalize one small segment of the population are nothing less than mean spirited."

South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley, whom some have touted as a potential Republican vice presidential candidate, said last week that a transgender bathroom bill is not needed in her state. South Dakota Gov. Dennis Daugaard, also a Republican, vetoed similar legislation March 1.

Tennessee is a smaller state than North Carolina but larger than Mississippi, whose governor signed a religious-freedom bill April 5 that activists say allows private businesses and public employees to discriminate against gay couples and others in the LGBT community. Both North Carolina and Mississippi have been in the cross hairs of activists' ire after their anti-gay legislation became law, and governors of five states have banned travel there on state business.

In 2013, Tennessee received about \$1.3 billion in state and local tax revenue from tourism, compared with \$3 billion in North Carolina and \$630 million in Mississippi, according to comparable reports from each state.

But primarily because of its music industry, Tennessee had about 96.4 million tourists in 2013, compared with 52.5 million in North Carolina and 21.6 million in Mississippi. More than 3 in 5 were from out of state, and visitors across the state spent almost a third of their travel money in Nashville, home of the Grand Ole Opry.

Both Stewart and others said the bathroom bill could hinder progress the state has made in recent years to create a business-friendly climate.

"What we're doing with this sort of bill is absolutely putting that sort of progress in jeopardy," Stewart said.

Former state Sen. David Fowler, who serves as president of the Family Action Council of Tennessee, ripped Slatery for his opinion, saying it simply "regurgitates legal arguments made by President Barack Obama's administration." He contended that Slatery's opinion relied on "settlement agreements," not court decisions.

"Thankfully, the attorney general did mention that, by law, no money can be withheld from a state until the state loses its legal arguments, and then only if it doesn't come into compliance with that ruling within 30 days," he said. "No one needs to run around like their pants are on fire as if there is some immediate, real threat to Tennessee losing Title IX funds."

Contributing: Holly Meyer, The Tennessean; The Associated Press. Follow Joel Ebert on Twitter: @joelebert29

Related:

The cartoonist's homepage, knoxnews.com/opinion/charlie-daniel (Photo: Charlie Daniel, Knoxville (Tenn.) News Sentinel)

Contraception Compromise Acceptable If It Ends Legal Challenges, Administration Says

By Robert Barnes

[Washington Post](#), April 12, 2016

The Obama administration said a compromise floated by the Supreme Court to resolve objections from religious organizations to providing their employees with contraceptives would work only if it was clear that the women would receive the coverage through other means, and if it ended the controversy.

Solicitor General Donald B. Verrilli Jr. told the court that requiring a modification to the accommodation already offered to the religiously affiliated colleges, charities and hospitals was unnecessary.

He said a modification would be acceptable only if the court ruled that it would satisfy the Religious Freedom Restoration Act and if it halted lawsuits from groups that say providing contraceptive coverage would make them complicit in sin.

Anything less, he wrote, "would lead to years of additional litigation, during which tens of thousands of women would likely continue to be denied the coverage to which they are legally entitled."

In their brief to the court, lawyers for the groups said they were amenable to a compromise if it truly left the groups out of the process — even having to sign documents that said they objected.

"There are many ways in which the employees . . . could receive cost-free contraceptive coverage through the same insurance company that would not require further involvement by the petitioner, including the way described in the court's order," lawyers Paul D. Clement and Noel Francisco wrote.

"And each one of those ways is a less restrictive alternative that dooms the government's ongoing effort to use the threat of massive penalties to compel petitioners to forsake their sincerely held religious beliefs."

Clement and Francisco represent, respectively, the Little Sisters of the Poor, a charity run by Catholic nuns, and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh, two of the challengers.

At oral arguments in the case on March 23, the court's four liberal justices seemed to agree that the Obama administration had offered an acceptable compromise for religiously affiliated organizations that want to be freed from the obligation to supply their female employees with no-cost contraceptive coverage.

The accommodation requires the groups to tell the government they object, then allows the government to work with the groups' insurers to provide the coverage without the organizations' involvement or financial support.

But Justice Anthony M. Kennedy, who could provide the fifth vote to uphold such a plan, seemed to agree with the conservative justices that the government would be "hijacking" the groups' insurance plans to provide the coverage, even if the groups were not paying for it.

Less than a week later, the justices issued an unusual order asking both the government and the groups to provide their reactions to a proposed compromise: Employees could receive contraceptive coverage through their employers' plans, "but in a way that does not require any involvement" from the employers beyond their decision to provide health insurance.

The difference between that and what the government had already offered, Verrilli said in his new brief, seemed to be only that the groups did not have to certify in writing that they objected to providing the coverage.

But "a requirement that an employer state in writing its religious objection and eligibility for an exemption is a minimally intrusive process, and petitioners have never suggested an alternative arrangement like the one posited in the court's order," Verrilli wrote.

The court faces some urgency in trying to find a solution. Eight of the nation's regional appeals courts have upheld the mandate and the Obama administration's accommodation, while one has struck them down. Simply reaffirming those decisions would mean that the national health-care law would be enforced differently depending on the location of an organization and its employees.

The court went into unusual specificity in asking the parties to address how that could happen, and it outlined a scenario.

It said an organization could contract to provide health insurance for its employees but inform the insurance company that it did not want the plan to include contraceptive coverage that it found objectionable.

Then the insurer could separately notify employees "that the insurance company will provide cost-free contraceptive coverage, and that such coverage is not paid for by petitioners and is not provided through petitioners' health plan."

Under such a plan, the court's order said, an organization would have no involvement beyond contracting with an insurance provider.

"Petitioners would have no legal obligation to provide such contraceptive coverage, would not pay for such coverage and would not be required to submit any separate notice to their insurer, to the federal government or to their employees," the order said.

"At the same time, petitioners' insurance company — aware that petitioners are not providing certain contraceptive coverage on religious grounds — would separately notify petitioners' employees that the insurance company will provide cost-free contraceptive coverage, and that such coverage is not paid for by petitioners and is not provided through petitioners' health plan."

The groups in their response said that to be truly independent, they would essentially "not be complying with that mandate at all. They would be exempt from that mandate, and the commercial insurer would be complying with a separate mandate imposed by the federal government."

Both sides said an additional compromise would be needed for those organizations that self-insure or contract with a church plan that does not provide contraceptives.

Each side is required to file a brief reacting to the other by April 20. The court will rule before its term ends in June.

Congress Sends Obama Bill Incentivizing Zika Drug Development

By Toni Clarke And David Morgan

[Reuters](#), April 12, 2016

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Aid Groups Aim To Put Mental Health On World Agenda

By Benedict Carey

[New York Times](#), April 12, 2016

Good mental health care is scarce in many parts of the United States, but it is nonexistent in most of the world. In developing countries, the ratio of mental health professionals to citizens is about one in a million — and that vast majority of people with treatable conditions like anxiety and depression are left to their own devices, or to the ministrations of local folk healers.

This week, the World Bank and the World Health Organization are convening hundreds of doctors, aid groups and government officials to start an ambitious effort to move mental health to the forefront of the international development agenda.

“The situation with mental health today is like H.I.V.-AIDS two decades ago,” Tim Evans, the senior director of health, nutrition and population at the World Bank Group, said Tuesday in a call with reporters. “We are kick-starting a similar movement for mental health, putting it squarely on the global agenda.”

The conference in Washington coincides with the publication on Tuesday of the first global estimate of potential returns on investing in treatment programs for depression and anxiety, the most common mental disorders, which are now epidemic in conflict zones and refugee communities.

In a review of data from 36 countries, including poor nations in Africa and Asia as well as affluent countries in Europe and elsewhere, an international research team calculated that every dollar of investment in such programs would bring a return of \$3 to \$5 in recovered economic contributions and years of healthy life. The study appears in the journal *The Lancet Psychiatry*.

“About 30 percent of total disability costs are due to mental health disorders — this is huge number,” said Dr. Shekhar Saxena, director of the mental health and substance abuse department at the World Health Organization and one of the study’s co-authors.

An expert not involved in the research said the analysis used state-of-the-art methods and was persuasive, given how little is known about interventions in developing countries in particular.

“For a decision maker at the Ministry of Finance, these numbers would be a low-risk, high-gain investment,” said the expert, Kjell Arne Johansson, an associate professor of global public health and primary care at the University of Bergen in Norway.

Dr. Johansson added, however, that because there were “few health economic evaluations of this kind available,” it was difficult to compare the expected returns on investment in other types of prevention and treatment programs.

Mental health has traditionally languished near the bottom of the international health agenda, as well as nations’ health spending. But international aid groups have sponsored dozens of interventions for anxiety and depression in developing countries: for example, training mental health

workers in Liberia in the wake of the Ebola outbreak and the civil war there; and setting up screening and treatment services for women in Rwanda victimized by sexual or gender-based abuse.

In the analysis, the research team used a standardized tool called OneHealth to calculate treatment costs and outcomes in the 36 countries from 2016 to 2030.

Assuming a 5 percent improvement in health and restored productivity, the research team calculated that an investment of \$147 billion in treatment for these common mood disorders would result in some \$400 billion in returns, said Dan Chisholm a health economist at W.H.O. and another co-author of the study.

Billionaire Announces \$250 Million In Cancer Immunotherapy Funding

By Jayne O'Donnell

[USA Today](#), April 13, 2016

WASHINGTON — Cancer immunotherapy will get a hefty dose of its own moonshot Wednesday when a tech billionaire announces he’s giving \$250 million to six cancer centers nationwide, including Manhattan’s Memorial Sloan Kettering and Stanford.

Sean Parker, founder of the music file-sharing service Napster and the founding president of Facebook, says he is putting his money behind cancer immune therapy because it is at a turning point and would benefit from research that is done without regard for the costs.

Immunotherapy, which enhances the body’s immune system to kill cancer cells, is best known these days because former president Jimmy Carter was on an immune-based drug treatment when he announced in December that there is no detectable cancer in his body.

Parker’s enormous cash infusion is the largest ever for cancer immunotherapy — and one of the largest ever for cancer research — and comes three months after President Obama called for a \$1 billion federal cancer research program that he dubbed a “moonshot.” The estate of the billionaire shipping magnate Daniel Ludwig donated \$540 million to six cancer centers in 2014 and Nike co-founder Phil Knight pledged \$500 million to cancer researchers at Oregon Health & Science University in 2013.

Last month, former New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg, Jones Apparel Group founder Sidney Kimmel and other philanthropists announced a \$125 million donation for cancer immunotherapy research for the Johns Hopkins University medical school.

The new Parker Institute for Cancer Immunotherapy in San Francisco will fund “high risk best ideas that may not get funded by the government,” says Jeffrey Bluestone, a prominent immunologist and former University of California, San Francisco official who now heads the institute.

The institute hopes to improve upon what it calls slow progress in improving cancer survival rates. In the last 20 years, federal data show the the five-year survival rate for lung cancer is up from just over 13% to about 17%.

Currently, immune therapy is only approved “as a treatment of last resort,” Parker complains, which he says means it’s only used after patients’ immune systems are destroyed by chemotherapy and radiation

“I want to make it a front-line treatment,” Parker said in an interview here last month. “It would change the whole cost of care downstream.”

Just as the White House’s moonshot hopes to foster collaboration between typically competing hospitals, Parker’s new institute will coordinate research across the six academic cancer centers and other researchers who may be added after additional money is raised. Each of the cancer centers in the consortium agrees it will send top scientists to join the Parker Institute and relinquish considerable control over their research.

Thanks to the funding, Judd Wolchok, a renowned cancer researcher and oncologist at Memorial Sloan Kettering, estimates he and his staff spend about a third of their time working to get grant funding and, “now we can use our time to directly make progress.”

Some try to manage expectations when it comes to cancer immunotherapy, which led to many sensational reports of what some mistakenly described as Carter’s “cure.”

Cleveland oncologist Stan Gerson says immunotherapy can lead to “dramatic responses in lethal cancers,” but he notes that just 30%-40% of patients benefit, most relapse in one to three years, and little is known about how and why some patients respond and others don’t.

“Is it a replacement for everything else we’re doing?” Gerson says of immunotherapy. “Right now we can’t say so ... but this is the time to make investments and pronouncements.”

Dr. Jedd D. Wolchok , Chief, Melanoma and Immunotherapeutics Service at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in Photo by John O’Boyle, Freelance ORG XMIT: JO 134700 seanparker 4/7/2016 [Via MerlinFTP Drop] (Photo: John O”Boyle for USA TODAY)

Gerson, who is director of the Case Comprehensive Cancer Center, estimates that another \$10 billion would be needed to get the treatments approved and to patients.

Parker is contributing a quarter of the total moonshot Obama proposed for all cancer research and jump-starting the research in the most promising area right now.

“We want to be focused and we want to go fast.” says Parker. “Two words don’t come up often when talking about cancer research are ‘focus and fast.’”

Puerto Rico Rescue Debate Postponed In U.S. Congress

[Reuters](#), April 12, 2016

Full-text stories from Reuters currently cannot be included in this document. You may, however, click the link above to access the story.

Puerto Rico’s Pension Bailout

[Wall Street Journal](#), April 12, 2016

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

Don’t Reward Mismanagement: Opposing View

By Dominic Frederico

[USA Today](#), April 12, 2016

The \$3.7 trillion municipal bond market is at a crossroads. Under the current system, municipalities borrow at attractive rates and, in return, investors receive guarantees they will be repaid. This benefits everyone: Attractive rates translate into lower taxpayer costs for repaying this debt, and tax exemptions on many of these bonds make them attractive investments for retirees and families.

Unfortunately, this market is facing a significant challenge. Congress is considering whether to eliminate the constitutional protections provided to bondholders in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. Such a move would alter established rules of law, trample on bondholder rights, and impact markets well beyond Puerto Rico.

In order to access attractive rates, Puerto Rico made certain commitments to investors. Now it wants to change the rules after the fact. Federal intervention to retroactively change the legal rules would reward bloated spending in Puerto Rico and spill over into increased debt costs for state and local governments around the country. This, in turn, would adversely impact the ability of municipalities to raise capital for infrastructure and other needs.

We do agree that Puerto Rico requires congressional action to get its finances in order, including the creation of a strong federal oversight board to ensure that its government makes tangible reforms.

This includes producing proper financial statements, encouraging constructive negotiations with creditors, and respecting Puerto Rico’s constitutional, legal and contractual obligations.

Calls in Congress to create “super bankruptcy” powers would traumatize the broader municipal bond market and freeze Puerto Rico’s financing for years. Cramming down losses onto taxpaying investors, including retirees, while bailing out Puerto Rico’s mismanaged government is the wrong approach.

Investors want a better path, one that bolsters municipal markets and restores confidence that Congress will enforce the law, not change it retroactively to reward mismanagement and encourage further wrongdoing.

Dominic Frederico is chief executive officer and president of Assured Guaranty.

Fixing Puerto Rico: Our View

[USA Today](#), April 12, 2016

The list of things that Congress hasn't done is long. It hasn't addressed the budget deficit, shored up Social Security or restrained health care costs. It hasn't come to terms with climate change or immigration. It hasn't fixed an overly burdensome tax code or a declining Postal Service.

So it comes as a pleasant surprise that lawmakers have decided to take on the issue of Puerto Rico, the U.S. territory of 3.5 million people that is drowning in debt.

House Republicans are expected to begin committee debate Wednesday on a bill that would allow Puerto Rican municipalities, utilities and state-owned companies to renegotiate their debts under favorable terms. The measure would also create a federally appointed control board to temporarily oversee the island's finances.

The measure represents what has been sorely lacking in Congress in recent years: a good-faith effort to solve a festering problem through pragmatism and cross-party consultation. Although some Democrats and Puerto Rican leaders have criticized the control board aspect of the plan, such boards are necessary and highly effective when governments get too far into debt. A board has helped Detroit address its debt problems, and a similar one got Washington, D.C., back onto its feet in the 1990s.

While Puerto Rican finances are of little concern to most Americans, it is refreshing to see Congress tackle any issue. And this one has the added benefit of being unpopular with hedge funds that have bought up a significant part of Puerto Rico's debt and have been banking on their ability to force a hard bargain.

Hedge funds and other investors have indulged — perhaps even enabled — Puerto Rico's profligate ways in part because federal law prohibits the island's local governments and state-owned companies from declaring bankruptcy. Without that ability, investors figured they could get very good terms in the event of widespread defaults.

But that approach was predicated on Congress not changing the law to allow bankruptcies, or doing what is proposed now, which is to allow for a bankruptcy-like restructuring process outside of bankruptcy.

What's more, the House plan could serve as a template for handling states in over their heads. No state has anywhere near the debt load of Puerto Rico. But a number — we're looking at you, Illinois — have made absurdly large

commitments to pensions and health care for government retirees.

These excessive commitments put states' future in serious doubt. State governments, like the territorial government of Puerto Rico, are considered sovereign entities and cannot declare bankruptcy. One solution would be to allow states to renegotiate their heavily troubled pension and health plans in federal bankruptcy court.

When governments get in over their head, something has to give. It is gratifying that, for a change, Congress wants to be part of the solution instead of the problem.

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Puerto Rico's Prosperous D.C. Power Couple

By Eric Lipton And Michael Corkery

[New York Times](#), April 12, 2016

WASHINGTON — As Puerto Rico has spiraled toward possible bankruptcy, the island's sole representative in Congress has seen his family wealth swell, thanks in part to Wall Street companies that have sought to capitalize on the island's financial crisis and have hired his wife to advise them.

The dual roles — those of a lawmaker and a spouse who are both involved in the financial affairs of their community — are hardly unusual in Washington, a city where power couples are increasingly common and, at times, celebrated.

But legislation that Pedro R. Pierluisi, a Democrat and the resident commissioner to Congress from Puerto Rico, has introduced would benefit at least two of the companies that have hired his wife, María Elena Carrión, for financial advice.

Ms. Carrión set up her own Puerto Rico-based financial advisory firm just 20 days after Mr. Pierluisi, 56, was elected to Congress in 2008, records show. Its value has climbed to more than \$1 million since, and the couple's average net worth has increased 27-fold since that election.

And as Ms. Carrión, 51, has done her work for these firms, Mr. Pierluisi's office has been lobbied by two of her clients, Fundamental Advisors and Och-Ziff Capital Management, documents provided by the resident commissioner's office show.

Separately, a Wall Street hedge fund executive whose firm took part in a \$3.5 billion bond sale in 2014 for Puerto Rico, has raised money for Mr. Pierluisi's race for governor of Puerto Rico, campaign finance records and emails show.

"The congressman would like to continue the dialogue with the investment community," said an email invitation the executive sent in July 2014. It added that "other asset managers and political personalities" would be attending the

event. "A contribution is suggested, as the congressman is pursuing the governorship in 2016."

No House rules require Mr. Pierluisi to disclose the names of his wife's clients, and he did not. The names of her Wall Street clients came to light after The New York Times requested them.

In separate interviews, both Mr. Pierluisi and Ms. Carrión said they kept their professional careers separate, and that nothing that Mr. Pierluisi had done in Congress had in any way been intended to benefit his wife's start-up company, Multicultural Capital, or his bid for governor.

"She has every right to engage in her profession," Mr. Pierluisi said during an interview at his Capitol Hill office. "It has nothing to do with what I am doing in Congress. The only link here is that it happens in Puerto Rico."

Ms. Carrión — who earned a master's degree in business administration from Columbia University and spent more than a decade working for Wall Street investment banks — called questions about the potential conflict of interest unfounded.

"I'm a mergers and acquisitions specialist with 30 years experience in the financial sector," she said in a written statement. "As a woman and a minority, I'm proud to own my own business."

Executives at the firms that hired her, including Fundamental Advisors and Och-Ziff, declined to comment on the record.

House ethics rules place no limits on the work that a spouse of a lawmaker can do. Two ethics lawyers who examined the matter at the request of The Times said they saw no violation of the rules based on the work that Ms. Carrión has done.

But Meredith McGehee, policy director at the Campaign Legal Center, a campaign finance watchdog group, said that Mr. Pierluisi should have disclosed the deals in which his wife had been involved.

"Democracy is a confidence game — people need to have confidence that elected officials did not come into power to enrich themselves," Ms. McGehee said. "The reality is what they have done here has created some smoke, the appearance of a conflict, no matter how much the congressman protests that assertion."

Ms. Carrión describes Multicultural Capital as an "independent consulting boutique" that helps companies interested in investing in Puerto Rico and other Latino markets find investment properties worth buying.

When she opened the business after her husband's election, it represented a return to the financial world for Ms. Carrión, an expert in emerging markets who had worked for 15 years at Wall Street firms like Prudential Financial and Bankers Trust before taking a break to pursue a doctorate in Puerto Rican history.

From her small office in San Juan, Ms. Carrión fielded requests from investors looking to buy or sell assets, including hotels and residential buildings.

Her work in this area has coincided with a surge in interest in the island by major Wall Street players, like Apollo Global Management and Och-Ziff Capital Management, two New York-based investment funds. They went to Puerto Rico looking for bargains on so-called distressed assets, such as struggling hotels, or to buy some of the island's public debt, because the government was offering unusually high interest rates to pull in much-needed money.

Och-Ziff asked for Ms. Carrión's help in 2012 and 2014 as it looked for investments, eventually purchasing stakes in a hotel and residential complex on the island. Ms. Carrión's firm earned a fee of more than \$1 million for helping set up the deal, according to participants in the transaction. She would not say how much her company earned in fees.

More recently, Ms. Carrión was hired by Fundamental Advisors. Her company was not able to help find a suitable investment, but her fee was in the tens of thousands of dollars before the contract was terminated at the end of last year.

In March 2014, Och-Ziff was one of at least a dozen hedge funds that purchased large stakes in \$3.5 billion worth of bonds sold by the Puerto Rican government, with the help of Wall Street firms including Morgan Stanley.

This bond offering, the largest sale of junk-rated municipal debt in United States history, attracted hedge funds instead of the more traditional municipal bond investors because of the unusually high interest rates that the strapped Puerto Rican government was willing to offer.

"It is a very important event for Puerto Rico," Hector Negroni, chief investment officer at the hedge fund run by Fundamental Advisors, told The Financial Times on the day of the sale. "The size of the deal, the audience they are targeting and the price they are paying acknowledge the depth of Puerto Rico's liquidity issues."

Within months of the 2014 bond sale, Wall Street executives involved in the transaction turned to Mr. Pierluisi's office for help. He had introduced legislation first in July 2014 and again in February 2015 that would allow the Puerto Rican government to take advantage of United States bankruptcy provisions available to the 50 states.

For companies like Och-Ziff and Fundamental Advisors, that change in the law would protect their investments in Puerto Rico general obligation bonds if the island won bankruptcy protection, while holders of other debts issued by the Puerto Rican government would be paid back less than promised.

"The congressman took this position for one reason and one reason only — because he believes it is in the best interests of the 3.5 million American citizens that he represents," a statement from his office said.

But in August 2014, Julio A. Cabral-Corrada, then a broker at Morgan Stanley, which had helped issue the \$3.5 billion in debt, organized a fund-raising event at the Peninsula Hotel on Fifth Avenue in New York, openly hinting in the email invitation that attendees would have access to Mr. Pierluisi “to continue the dialogue with the investment community” as the negotiations in Congress continued.

House members are not allowed to “sponsor or participate in any solicitation that offers donors any special access,” the rules say.

Mr. Cabral-Corrada, in an interview, declined to discuss the event or those who attended.

Campaign finance records — for Mr. Pierluisi’s House race and his account in Puerto Rico to fund his bid for governor — show contributions around the time of the event from more than a dozen financial industry figures and lobbyists.

Mr. Pierluisi, provided with a copy of the fund-raising invitation, said he had not previously seen it.

“This is unfortunate language,” he said.

Congress has not taken any action on legislation intended to help resolve Puerto Rico’s financial crisis. A new proposal emerged late last month that would no longer guarantee that general obligation bondholders were fully protected. In the interview, Mr. Pierluisi offered his tentative support for part of this new House proposal, which would replace his own legislative plan, as further proof that he was not trying to help any of his wife’s former clients.

Ms. Carrión added that she had never worked for the hedge fund divisions of the firms that invested in bonds, but instead helped their private equity wings, which purchase real estate assets like hotels, and that her contracts with all of her clients included a provision making clear she does not lobby Congress.

Some of the firms are so small, though, that executives are involved in running both divisions out of the same offices.

In the time since Mr. Pierluisi has been in office, his wife’s firm has grown from having no revenue to being worth more than \$1 million, his most recent financial disclosure report, filed in 2015, says.

Financial disclosure reports Mr. Pierluisi filed with the House show his family’s average net worth, subtracting debts from assets, surged to \$1 million in 2014, the most recent report, from \$36,501 in 2008, the year he was elected.

Mr. Pierluisi said the change in his family wealth was entirely a result of his wife’s earnings.

In Puerto Rico, some see a familiar pattern. Emilio Pantojas García, a professor at the University of Puerto Rico who has written extensively on the island’s debt crisis, said that even if Ms. Carrión’s work had not benefited from Mr. Pierluisi’s presence in Congress, the arrangement was disturbing.

“While everyone else suffers, they are profiting from the crisis,” he said. “Unfortunately, it is par for the course when it comes to the political elite in Puerto Rico.”

Eric Lipton reported from Washington, and Michael Corkery from New York.

Seeking Bold Tax Overhaul, Texas Lawmaker To Test Congress

[New York Times](#), April 13, 2016

HOUSTON — Over two decades in Congress, Representative Kevin Brady has always been popular with colleagues. Now that the genial Texas Republican has become chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, Mr. Brady has got real power, too.

Or does he?

The committee has authority over taxation, health policy and retirement benefit programs, and it holds the potential to significantly influence the economy not just in the United States but the entire world.

“It can do big things,” he said during an interview in his Houston district.

Yet he has assumed the gavel in an era when congressional leaders, following partisan imperatives, have increasingly curbed the independence of committee chiefs.

Complicating matters for Mr. Brady is that Speaker Paul D. Ryan is unusual among leaders in his passion for the issues before the committee — which Mr. Ryan himself chaired before becoming speaker last year.

Mr. Brady says that doesn’t bother him. “It’s a great advantage to have a speaker who knows the issues and knows the importance,” he explained.

John A. Boehner, Mr. Ryan’s predecessor, once dismissed a previous chairman’s tax plan by saying “blah blah blah.” After chuckling at the memory, Mr. Brady added, “Paul Ryan is all green-light thinking on tax reform.”

Mr. Brady’s bigger problem is whether Congress can act at all.

Both parties complain of skewed tax incentives that push companies based in the United States toward so-called inversion deals, in which an American company acquires a foreign one and then moves its headquarters abroad to shrink its tax liabilities.

But partisan strategy and differences on policy have foreclosed serious negotiations on an international tax overhaul this year, leaving the Treasury Department to issue new regulations last week intended to curtail inversion deals.

Mr. Brady, a longtime Chamber of Commerce executive before arriving in Washington, eyes something bigger: the first comprehensive rewrite of corporate and individual taxation in 30 years.

He is looking at more fundamental changes, like a shift toward taxing consumption rather than income.

"Let's not tweak what we have and call it a day," Mr. Brady said. "Let's think bold about tax reform, and look at it with fresh eyes."

Recent predecessors have found only eyestrain.

In 2014, Representative Dave Camp, Republican of Michigan, who was the chairman of the committee at the time, labored to design an overhaul to maximize bipartisan appeal.

The plan raised the same amount of revenue as the existing system. Unlike many Republican tax plans, including those of the 2016 presidential candidates, it didn't confer disproportionate benefits on wealthy Americans that would make the system less progressive.

Mr. Camp's product went nowhere, as Mr. Boehner's sarcastic reaction signaled. But Mr. Brady said the episode encouraged him by showcasing how lower rates and fewer loopholes could improve the economy.

"Those were the tightest constraints that you could possibly accept in new tax reform," Mr. Brady said. "I think we can loosen those constraints."

Loosening them would increase Republican enthusiasm by permitting deeper rate cuts; Mr. Camp could only pare the top rate for high earners to 35 percent from 39.6 percent. Yet those "tightest constraints" represent a bare minimum for cooperation from congressional Democrats.

"Major changes in American government almost always require buy-in from both parties," Mr. Brady acknowledged. If Democrats emerge from the November elections with more clout, he'll need more buy-in.

His good humor masks a fierce competitive streak. Mr. Brady once broke his shoulder sliding headfirst into home plate in the annual Democrats-against-Republicans congressional baseball game.

He understands the difficulty of repeating the triumph of Dan Rostenkowski, the congressional Democrat who struck a landmark tax deal with a Republican Senate and President Ronald Reagan in 1986.

"We don't have rose-colored glasses on," Mr. Brady said.

But he insisted that a tax overhaul was "inevitable." That's something he'll have to prove. Continue reading the main story

Teach For America Applications Fall Again, Diving 35 Percent In Three Years

By Emma Brown

[Washington Post](#), April 12, 2016

Applications to Teach for America fell by 16 percent in 2016, marking the third consecutive year in which the organization — which places college graduates in some of the nation's toughest classrooms — has seen its applicant pool shrink.

Elisa Villanueva Beard, TFA's chief executive, announced the figures in an online letter to supporters Tuesday morning, describing the steps that the organization is taking to stoke interest and reverse the trend.

"Our sober assessment is that these are the toughest recruitment conditions we've faced in more than two decades," she wrote. "And they call on us all to reconsider and strengthen our efforts to attract the best and most diverse leaders our country has to offer."

TFA received 37,000 applications in 2016, down from 57,000 in 2013 — a 35 percent dive in three years. It's a sharp reversal for an organization that grew quickly during much of its 25-year history, becoming a stalwart in education reform circles and a favorite among philanthropists.

Teach for America now boasts 50,000 corps members and alumni; some have stayed in the classroom and others have gone on to work in education in other ways, joining nonprofits, running for office and leading charter schools. Its alumni include some of most recognized names in public education, including D.C. Schools Chancellor Kaya Henderson and her predecessor, Michelle Rhee.

But as Teach for America's influence has grown, so has resistance to it. The organization — which trains prospective teachers for five weeks and demands just a two-year commitment — has drawn criticism for creating instability in troubled schools that could benefit from sustained efforts with more experienced educators.

The size of TFA's corps of teachers grew at an 18 percent compounded annual rate between 2000 and 2013, according to Villanueva Beard's letter. But the growth stopped in 2014, when applications dropped 12 percent to about 50,000, yielding a corps of 5,800; in 2015, applications again declined by 12 percent, to 44,000, yielding a corps of 4,100.

The declining interest means that TFA is providing fewer corps members to school districts each year: The organization generally accepts about 10 percent of its applicant pool, and it refuses to lower its bar for admission, Villanueva Beard wrote. This year's corps is likely to be several hundred smaller than last year's.

"These shortfalls matter. Corps members are good at their work," she wrote. "Our school and district partners want to hire far more of them than our current recruitment effort is producing."

The shortfalls also have budget implications for TFA, which receives a fee for each teacher it places. Regional offices might need to make "organizational changes" to ensure costs are in line with the new, smaller scale, Villanueva Beard wrote. (The national office staff, meanwhile, is shrinking by 15 percent — part of a major reorganization she announced in late February.)

She blamed the decline on a number of factors that are driving enrollment drops in many teacher-preparation programs, including the improving economy, which offers

young college graduates more options than they had during the recession. In addition, she wrote, the public debate about education is polarized and “toxic,” driving away talented people from a profession that needs them.

“Anyone concerned with the future of our nation should be alarmed by the staggering decline in enrollment we’re seeing across the country in teacher preparation programs,” she wrote.

She tacitly acknowledged that some of the recruitment problems are due to increasingly vocal critics of TFA, including some alumni. “The toxic debate surrounding education — and attacks on organizations that seek to bring more people to the field — is undeniably pushing future leaders away from considering education as a space where they can have real impact,” she wrote.

To boost interest in TFA on college campuses, the organization is focusing on recruiting students earlier in their college career, when they are sophomores and juniors, before they commit to another employer. More than 5,300 current juniors have applied to join TFA in 2017, a nearly 50 percent increase from last year.

TFA also is trying to give college students a more hands-on view of life as a teacher, including by taking them into classrooms for a glimpse of a corps member at work.

“We are changing how we recruit,” Villanueva Beard wrote. “I know it will take several years to rebound fully. I also see positive signs that we will turn the tide.”

Villanueva Beard said in an interview that the organization had missed warning signs that it should have paid closer attention to, such as a declining sense of satisfaction among current corps members, who play a key role in spreading informal word-of-mouth assessments to potential applicants. In other words, TFA corps members were becoming disillusioned, and the organization was too slow to respond.

“We missed the cue to take that on as aggressively as we should have, and we’re doing that now,” she said. Villanueva Beard hopes that the major reorganization she announced six weeks ago will make a difference: TFA is decentralizing, shifting autonomy and decision-making to its 52 regional offices.

Regional offices that are familiar with local schools will do a better job at figuring out how to train corps members so they’re better prepared to teach in those schools, Villanueva Beard said. And they’ll do a better job figuring out what it will take to help corps members once they’re in the classroom.

“Everyone’s just taking a fresh look at how to do this work from a local perspective, both in training and supporting our teachers, which is quite different from how we did this previously,” she said. The goal is to make sure current corps members are happy and feel like they have the help they need to be successful at what is a very difficult job.

“I want people to say, ‘Yeah this is the hardest thing you’ll ever do ... but I would not choose to do anything else,’” Villanueva Beard said.

Ford Unveils \$1.2B Redevelopment Plan For Dearborn Offices

By Brent Snively

[Detroit Free Press](#), April 12, 2016

Ford unveiled sweeping plans today to redevelop dozens of buildings in Dearborn that house more than 30,000 employees in a project that will transform the automaker’s presence in the city into two distinct campuses over the next 10 years.

The project, which represents an investment estimated at more than \$1.2 billion, is intended to give Ford’s employees the work environment and technology necessary to design and develop cars of the future.

In some ways, the massive project, in planning for more than three years, is long overdue.

In addition to its headquarters off Michigan Avenue, Ford has an assortment of nearly 70 disconnected buildings along Oakwood Boulevard, and many of those buildings are more than 60 years old. While some are only a few miles from one another, it isn’t always easy to get from one building to another.

“For many of our buildings, this is the first true renovation ... since they were originally built,” said Ford CEO Mark Fields. “Ford World Headquarters was opened in 1956, and 60% of our buildings are more than 50 years old, so this is a very substantial investment for us.”

The 10-year redevelopment project will be spearheaded by Ford Land, Ford’s real estate management arm, and architectural firm SmithGroupJJR.

When it’s done, the new campus will include a circular modern building that will showcase sustainable development. All the buildings will be equipped with the latest environmentally friendly technology, such as geothermal heating and cooling and the ability to generate renewable energy from the sun.

“When you look at our research and development center, it will have a lot of green areas that will link buildings with walking trails, bike paths, covered walkways. We will have autonomous vehicles, and on-demand shuttles and ebikes across the campus,” Fields said. “It will look like a very modern, forward-thinking company that takes sustainability and the environment very seriously.”

Ford declined to say how much it plans to spend on the project or if it will seek assistance from the State of Michigan.

Steve Morris, a real estate broker and managing principal of Axis Advisors in Farmington Hills, said the project easily represents a \$1.2-billion investment and reflects the automaker’s confidence in its growth.

"It's a very strong statement about the commitment to community and future of the automobile industry in Michigan," Morris said.

Mark Woods, chief operating officer at real estate brokerage firm Signature Associates, said Ford Land has a well-established track record of serving as a positive force for real estate development in Dearborn.

"This illustrates a commitment to maintaining their properties and keeping Ford relevant," Woods said. Ford Land's mission "never stops. It's always with a mind-set of, this is Ford's home, and they will preserve and protect it."

Ford's decision to update its facilities comes a year after General Motors said it will invest \$1 billion in its Warren Technical Center and add about 2,600 jobs over the next four years. GM's Tech Center project will include new design studios, a parking deck for design staff and renovation of research and development offices.

Ford's project includes the renovation or construction of more than 7.5 million square feet of work space, studios and labs. About 4.5 million square feet of that space will be either new or renovated space for research and development.

The centerpiece of the Ford product campus will be a new 700,000-square-foot design center that will include new studios and an outdoor design courtyard.

Most of the existing Ford Research and Engineering Center Campus, originally dedicated by U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower in 1953, will be demolished. However, a 14,000-square-foot design showroom that is part of that building will remain intact and will be upgraded to be used as an event venue.

The automaker also plans to update the office space at the Ford World Headquarters building and will build a building for its lending arm, Ford Motor Credit.

Other key elements of the renovations of the headquarters campus will include:

Ford's investment announcement also comes just days after the automaker said it plans to spend \$1.6 billion to build a plant to make small cars in Mexico.

Ford took a beating for several days from the UAW, Republican presidential front-runner Donald Trump and others on social media for that decision, even though most other automakers are also expanding in Mexico.

"This timing was driven by our decision over three years ago to look at our facilities," Fields said. "The work starts on Wednesday and is not in response to any news or political whims."

Yale Advances In Shaping Portfolio To Address Climate Change

[New York Times](#), April 13, 2016

Yale University has made progress in minimizing its endowment portfolio's exposure to less environmentally

sound investments such as stocks of companies that contribute to climate change, a letter released on Tuesday showed.

Yale generally does not manage its own investment directly but hires outside money managers to make decisions. Nearly two years ago, the Yale University Investment Office asked the firms that managed its endowment, then \$20.8 billion, to assess their investments. The office asked managers to avoid investments that did not take sensible steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Yale endowment, while not the largest, is closely watched by other universities and money managers who invest in publicly held companies.

On Tuesday, David F. Swensen, Yale's chief investment officer, released a letter to the school's Advisory Committee on Investor Responsibility saying that Yale had taken several steps with climate change in mind.

Rather than simply selling investments as a response to political pressures, Yale was asking its managers to consider the financial risks of climate change and the risks that those investments held if governments did impose carbon taxes. "What we did was to take a look at the economics and come up with an economically driven decision," he said in a telephone interview. Mr. Swensen added that the reaction was heartening.

"When we sent out the letter, one of our energy-focused managers, Arc Financial, did an analysis of a carbon audit of every single energy position in the portfolio and assessed the exposure to more stringent emissions regulation," he said. "They are using it as a tool when they make new investments. They also published a white paper on the issue."

In his letter to the committee, Mr. Swensen pointed out that the firm developed "a framework for assessing, reporting and comparing the greenhouse gas intensity of fossil fuel operations on an apples-to-apples basis."

Two of Yale's other money managers had positions that were not consistent with Yale's approach, Mr. Swensen wrote. One held a small position in a company that engaged in the production and sale of coal. Another had interests on Yale's behalf in two publicly traded oil sands producers. Though the investments were valued at only \$10 million in total, those positions have since been sold.

While it would not have been as easy for Yale to sell investments in individual companies because it does not manage most of its money internally, it still has some separate accounts that would allow the endowment to sell those stocks as it did when it sold holdings in South Africa and Sudan some years ago.

For example, the Yale endowment was close to making an investment in an energy company. "That investment had even been approved by the endowment's board," Mr. Swensen said. "But when we sat down with the company and

brought up these issues, they denied it was a problem, so we did not go forward with the investment.”

The move came out of growing pressure from students concerned about environmental issues. Some universities have divested themselves of fossil fuel stocks, while others have resisted action, arguing that they do not want to terminate a dialogue with such companies.

Mr. Swensen pioneered the use of alternative investments in such areas as hedge funds. Over the 20-year period that ended June 30, 2015, Yale had the strongest performance record in the endowment world. For that fiscal year, Yale turned in an 11.5 percent increase, bringing its endowment to \$25.6 billion.

Mr. Swensen’s average return over 10 years ending June 2015 was 10 percent, slightly eclipsed by returns at M.I.T., Bowdoin College and Princeton. At each of those schools, the endowment is led by a manager who trained under Mr. Swensen in the investment office at Yale.

Mr. Swensen recalled that the initial approach came up after Yale decided that it would not simply ask managers to sell shares in companies under question. Yale’s president, Peter Salovey, asked Mr. Swensen what the school could say, and the investment office came up with this plan. Continue reading the main story

She Had A Washington Job On TV. Then This ‘West Wing’ Actor Got One In Real Life.

By Monica Hesse

[Washington Post](#), April 12, 2016

We’ve seen it before: A Hollywood actor finds a cause, jets to Washington for a photo op and a handshake, makes a speech and flies home.

This is a story about a Hollywood actor who found a cause, then jetted to Washington, then moved to Washington, then got a job at a nonprofit group in Washington and then one morning found herself having meetings at the Pentagon, where some of the other attendees had no idea who she was.

Her name is Melissa Fitzgerald. She was on “The West Wing.” She played — well, we’ll get to that. First, the Pentagon. In a wood-paneled conference room, someone cues up a PSA in which fellow “West Wing” alums, as a favor to Fitzgerald, publicize the organization she now works for, Justice for Vets. On-screen, Bradley Whitford, Allison Janney and other cast members discuss the benefits of treatment courts for veterans who fall into legal trouble. The PSA finishes. An Army lawyer has a suggestion.

“You should go back and digitally put yourself in some scenes in ‘The West Wing,’ “ she jokes with Fitzgerald. “Because everyone else in the PSA was in it!”

Fitzgerald, 50, smiles apologetically. “Oh — I was. I was in it.”

“You were? Oh, my gosh. I didn’t know.”

“I knew, but I wasn’t going to say anything,” the lawyer’s colleague confides.

“So you’re famous?” the lawyer asks.

“I played Allison Janney’s assistant.”

CAROL! She played Carol. The unflappable right-hand woman to press secretary C.J. Cregg, seen in most episodes managing her boss’s work and love life.

After two decades in Hollywood, Fitzgerald now lives a very Carol existence. She has an apartment in Alexandria, Va. At work she has a small, gray office in which she keeps spare cardigans. She sometimes brings muffins for the communal kitchen, which has dirty dishes in the sink, like office kitchens everywhere.

“And emails,” she sighs, gesturing to her computer a few days after the Pentagon meeting, while she and a colleague figure out which contact list to use for a newsletter. “Do most people get 150 emails a day?”

In a roundabout way, this is Martin Sheen’s fault.

Sheen, who played “The West Wing’s” fictional president, had been a longtime advocate of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals, the umbrella organization of which Justice for Vets is a part. Sheen knew that Fitzgerald was an activist herself — the University of Pennsylvania graduate had founded a mentoring program in Los Angeles and produced a documentary about child soldiers in Uganda — and he also knew that Fitzgerald’s father was a Philadelphia judge who supported treatment courts in lieu of traditional prison sentences. In 2011, Sheen asked whether Fitzgerald was interested in coming along to the annual NADCP meeting. The stories she heard there moved her; she ended up volunteering and then co-producing another documentary, about the struggles of veterans returning home.

One evening a few years later, Fitzgerald was talking on the phone with the NADCP’s then-chief executive, West Huddleston. He mentioned that his senior director, an ex-Marine, had just resigned and that he needed a replacement to help expand the existence and role of treatment courts nationwide. “If I were a veteran, I’d throw my own hat in the ring,” Fitzgerald said offhandedly. A few days later, Huddleston called back. Was she serious?

Fitzgerald thought about it. “The West Wing,” her most recognizable role, had ended several years before. She was still acting, but mostly in smaller parts. As often as not, she was skipping the auditions that did come up so that she could go do activist-related work elsewhere around the country, which her agent told her was getting “demoralizing.”

She made a few phone calls.

She called Patrick Murphy, an old friend who is now the acting secretary of the Army. Did he think servicemen and women could respect someone who had never worn a uniform? “I told her that the Army and military desperately needed her leadership at this time,” Murphy remembers. The

gap between civilians and servicemen seemed to be widening. "We can't do this alone," he told her. "We need someone to bridge the civilian-military drift."

She talked to Janel Moloney, who played fellow assistant Donna on "The West Wing"; Fitzgerald is now the godmother to her son. "She needs to do something meaningful with her days," Moloney says about her friend. "She's always been that way — she needs it in order to survive."

She called Huddleston back. He said, "When can you start?" She said, "How about January?" He said, "How about Monday?"

The job would mean a pay cut from her most productive years in Hollywood. Then again, an actor who kept skipping her auditions to do activist work had an annual salary of zero dollars. More important, Justice for Vets seemed like a place where she could work on an important issue and be useful.

Huddleston wanted her to begin in time to be introduced at an upcoming convention. Fitzgerald got on a plane and came to Washington to meet with Chris Deutsch, the organization's communications director, who had prepared a few remarks for her to give.

"I honestly didn't know what to expect," Deutsch says. He'd been skeptical of Fitzgerald's hiring and wasn't sure whether she would be mostly a figurehead, or a spokeswoman, or what, exactly. But then she came to him with a marked-up copy of his speech: She'd stayed up all night revising it and wanted to make sure it was exactly right. "That was the moment I realized she was for real."

This is also a story about bubbles. How Hollywood is one. How Washington is one, too, in its own way. When Fitzgerald lived in Los Angeles, she had a sunny house in the chic Beachwood Canyon neighborhood and jobs in which her work clothes were costumes selected, ironed and laundered by professionals. When she moved to D.C., she had a one-bedroom apartment three blocks from her office. No furniture; she'd shipped herself a box containing an air mattress and a coffee maker. Her first night in the apartment, she went to bed, and it deflated to the floor. She got out of the air mattress. She took an Uber to Target. She bought a new air mattress. She started arriving at work at 8 a.m. and leaving after 8 p.m. This was now her life.

"Someone sent me an email that said, 'Can I have your answer by COB?' " Fitzgerald says. "I asked Chris, 'What's COB?' He said, 'You have lived a very good life if you don't know what COB is.' "

Actors work long hours. But nonprofit Washington is defined by not only the exhaustion of long hours but also the complications of paperwork, red tape, PowerPoints ("I had never done a -PowerPoint," she says) and time cards ("I said, 'Wait a second, I have to fill out a time card?' ").

"The West Wing" was one of the few shows that got the bubble of Washington exactly right. It was fervently beloved in

its day and, weirdly, nostalgically beloved even now, a decade after its last episode aired. Washingtonians still stop Fitzgerald to thank her for the show; it's hard to imagine that a supporting actor from, say, "NCIS" would be able to use her screen time to launch a wonky policy-related career.

After Huddleston offered the director job to Fitzgerald, "I got a lot of pushback," he says. "A couple of folks said she's an actress who has no connection to veterans and will have no credibility. I said, 'You know, it's so nontraditional that we're actually going to get some attention.' " He had interviewed traditional candidates, but none of them had the passion and "fearlessness" that he thought Fitzgerald did.

(It should be noted that in "The West Wing," Fitzgerald was a -buttoned-up background player, channeling an ordinary administrative assistant. In person, she is a frequent laugh, a passionate speaker and reliably the most magnetic personality in a room, with very good hair.)

Now her real-life role looks occasionally similar to her former on-screen life: She has an office wardrobe, composed in large part of clothes from a designer she sought out because she remembered the labels from her Carol wardrobe.

She has staff meetings.

"Okay," says her boss Carson Fox, the NADCP's current chief executive, at one such staff meeting, which was called to plan a summer conference. "So we're doing the color guard and then the intro?"

"Yes, I think you have to start with the color guard," Fitzgerald agrees.

"Let's see if we can find a really good keynote," someone else suggests.

"We can talk about who we want and see if it's someone I know," she offers. "And I don't mind having the keynote in the beginning."

She has conversations like this:

"I have a call on Monday at 10 a.m. with the head of the Triumph Games, and she would like to find a role for us, which would be great," she says to Deutsch when he stops by her office.

"That's great," he says. "When you get a chance, can you shoot me the final draft of your speech?"

"Will do," she says, and then she turns back to her computer.

It is lit by the soft glow of a fluorescent light panel overhead, and it emits the sound of emails coming in at frequent pings.

The 'Peace Pentagon,' An Activist Office In NoHo, Is Forced To Move

By Colin Moynihan

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For decades, members of left-leaning groups have used a pale brick building in Lower Manhattan as a base to work on campaigns and plan protest rallies. But a recent meeting concerned a different sort of logistics.

Members of the War Resisters League, Global Revolution TV and other groups that rent offices there gathered in a top-floor office to discuss boxing their possessions and soon leaving for good.

"A lot of things about the move are still up in the air," said Heidi Boghosian, executive director of the nonprofit AJ Muste Memorial Institute, which had owned the building at 339 Lafayette Street. "We should all be purging and packing."

The three-story, 9,789-square-foot structure at the corner of Bleecker Street, in NoHo, is known as the Muste building and often referred to as the Peace Pentagon because of the activists it attracts. It has provided low-priced offices to dozens of groups, including the Granny Peace Brigade and the Socialist Party USA, since 1968, when the War Resisters League began leasing it. The War Resisters bought the building in 1974, and the Muste Institute, which focuses on peace efforts and social justice projects, bought it four years later.

The building's future is expected to be much different. In October, unable to afford desperately needed repairs, the Muste (pronounced MUS-ty) Institute sold the building for \$20.75 million to 337 Lafayette L.P., owned by the developer Aby Rosen.

Cushman & Wakefield, which handled the transaction, said the price, about \$2,120 per square foot, set a high for commercial real estate in NoHo. Zoning allows for roughly 16,000 square feet of commercial, hotel or live-work development at the site, Cushman said, adding that several developers of nearby projects had obtained variances to build condominiums.

Over the last several years NoHo, between the East Village and Greenwich Village and just above SoHo, has changed rapidly, with high-rise buildings sprouting up and industrial buildings being converted into luxury residences.

Commercial rents in the neighborhood range from \$200 to \$400 per square foot, said Michael K. Davis of Corbett & Dullea Real Estate. Mr. Davis said that ground-floor rents along Broadway from Houston Street to Great Jones Street are about \$300 per square foot, with similar rates on the Bowery and slightly lower rates on Bond Street.

Sheldon Werdiger of RFR, Mr. Rosen's main company, said 339 Lafayette Street could hardly be a better location, adding that the area was improving and "very cool, very hip." Plans for the building are still being evaluated, he said. Last summer, another limited partnership owned by Mr. Rosen paid \$26 million for a former women's shelter at 348 Lafayette Street, planning to use it for retail space.

The popularity of the area carries a price, though, said Andrew Berman, the executive director of the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation.

"We're certainly chagrined by some of the changes we are seeing," he said, noting that many artists and activist groups had left the area.

The Muste Institute's board had little familiarity with commercial real estate in Manhattan when it decided to sell the building. The War Resisters League bought the property for \$60,000, and the institute, which is named after Abraham Johannes Muste, a pacifist who opposed the Vietnam War and advised the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., bought it for \$91,000 in 1978.

In recent years, the building provided a measure of continuity while similar spaces in Lower Manhattan — including the Brecht Forum, an institute that held lectures and exhibitions focused on the political left, and 9 Bleecker Street, a countercultural hub — moved or closed as the area gentrified.

A weakened support column in the Muste building was discovered about a decade ago and presented a nagging problem, however. Repairs were estimated at more than \$1 million, exceeding what the owner could easily manage. Many in the institute were reluctant to move, cherishing the building's history and worrying that selling it would be selling out. But after years of debate, the board unanimously agreed to sell.

Ms. Boghosian, the executive director, had previously led the National Lawyers Guild and felt her way through the process, negotiating with potential buyers and helping the board evaluate whether it made more sense to buy or rent new headquarters.

The building's buyer agreed that the institute and its tenants could remain there at no cost through May. The institute's board considered buying a building in East Harlem until discovering that a covenant created by a previous owner forbade advocacy of abortion rights or euthanasia from taking place there. The board was also interested in a space above the Strand bookstore because of its proximity to Union Square, the site of many political rallies, but it was too expensive, Ms. Boghosian said. Buildings with security measures that required visitors to show identification were ruled out because that could rankle activists.

In December, the board agreed to a five-year lease for \$35,000 a month on a 6,000-square-foot space on the top floor of a building on Canal Street. All of the institute's current tenants will move with it, Ms. Boghosian said. The institute plans to eventually buy a building.

Several Muste building tenants said they were relieved that, despite moving, they will be able to maintain relationships with peers in neighboring offices.

"I think it's great that we're all moving together," said Rebecca Centeno, who works with Paper Tiger Television

and Deep Dish TV, tenants that produce independent video reports.

The offices on Canal Street will be smaller, Ms. Boghosian said, but a large open central area is meant to encourage collaboration. She said that her most pressing job would be to make sure groups leave the Lafayette Street building on time. If they do not, the institute must forfeit \$1 million.

"We're on a really tight schedule," she said. "It's complicated by the fact that we are not one organization but 10 organizations, all with quirks."

Most large or heavy items will be disposed of, but one notable exception is the door to the War Resisters League office, which is painted red and covered with stickers. It will be brought to the Canal Street office as a symbol of the group's history. Other doors in the new office will be painted red, too, Ms. Boghosian said, and a wall will be covered with art and posters from the old building.

On a recent afternoon, volunteers in the War Resisters office packed dozens of boxes with paper to be recycled, including a brochure encouraging divestment in weapons manufacturers. Linda Thurston, the office manager, said that she was still adjusting to the move.

"Leaving the building is really rough because your workplace becomes kind of like your home," she said. "Inevitably I'm going to end up here one morning, forgetting that we've moved."