

"ADVANCE PEACE" DECREASES GUN VIOLENCE - SIGN UP STOCKTON

ROBERT E. OAKES

Richmond California, (population of approximately 98,000), experienced nearly 46 gun-related homicides and another 250 other violent gun-related crimes (per 100,000 residents) in 2006. After implementing its Advance Peace ("AP") initiative, the number of gun-related homicides and violent crimes declined over 50%. While it is impossible to say the substantial decline is only because of AP, clearly the program was a significant reason for the large drop in homicides and other violent crime.

The success of AP has motivated 10 California

cities (and 28 from out of state) with high rates of gun-related violent crimes to apply to create the program locally; only two California cities will be selected. Stockton, which as of November 15 had 47 homicides in 2017, is seeking to implement an AP program.

WHAT IS ADVANCE PEACE?

AP targets the small group of individuals most likely to be involved in gun violence and recruits them to participate in a comprehensive program that seeks to improve the individual while reducing their risk of engaging in gun violence. The individuals selected are typically young men of color between the ages of

18-24 that live in poverty. The program's seven components include: (1) multiple daily contact with AP staff; (2) creating a life map and developing goals; (3) social service navigation and referrals; (4) excursions; (5) internship opportunities; (6) intergenerational mentoring; and (7) stipend privileges. Each component is based upon evidence-based research demonstrating its effectiveness.

The main services participants receive include: life map creation, life skills training, anger management, financial management, and employment services.

After an individual has participated in the program for six months, he may be eligible for a monthly stipend up to \$1,000. Each participant wishing to receive a stipend is evaluated for eligibility, and the typical stipend ranges between \$300-\$700 monthly. All stipends are provided through private funding.

According to the National Council on Crime & Delinquency, "The stipend serves several purposes. First, it provides an incentive for young men who may otherwise be reluctant to engage in programming to be regular and active participants....Secondly, while the stipend payment is not large, it serves as an alternative to participating in illegal activity. Finally, the stipend sends a powerful message to participants about their worth. Through the stipends, they receive validation about changes they are making in their lives, acting as a form of positive reinforcement. Stipends... also

let the participants know that they are valuable and important."

While the stipend is only one small component of the AP, it has been seized upon by opponents of AP who wrongly claim that it is a payment to criminals for their not committing crime. Such an allegation ignores the reality of the causes of gun-violence and the proven solutions to addressing it.

HOW IS A CITY SELECTED?

According to Devone Boggan, the creator of AP and now the President and CEO of the non-profit that grew from its creation, the following criteria determines a city's eligibility for consideration:

- 3.2 gun murders/100,000;
- Buy-in from at least two of the following: City Administrator/Manager, Mayor, Chief of Police, or Elected Prosecutor;
- Commitment from one local/regional institutional philanthropic donor;
- Commitment from the City to work with the AP Evaluation Team;
- Documentation by the City of existing public/private partnerships that invest in healthy/positive youth development;
- Commitment from the City to a formal four-year contract/MOU with Advance Peace to implement a minimum of two 18-month Fellowship cohorts with a minimum of 50 Fellows during the four year contract/MOU term;
- Commitment from the City to invest at least \$250,000/year for a 4-year contract/MOU (1/3 of the cost of the 4-year program); and



DEC. 2 STOCKTON LIGHTED BOAT PARADE

- Identification by the City of those thought to be at the center of firearm hostilities and who law enforcement have had difficulty making a case against.
 - If a city is selected, Advance Peace provides the following during the 4-year agreement:
 - Securing the other 2/3 of funding for the 4-year program (\$500,000/yr);
 - Supporting two 18-month participant "Fellowships" for 50-70 at-risk individuals;
 - Serving as "home organization" for local program staff (AP will only hire Stockton residents to serve the Stockton AP program);
 - Providing technical assistance, training, and evaluation;
 - Reducing firearm assaults causing injury or death by 50% or more;
 - Reducing costs associated with ongoing gun violence;
 - Transforming lives and catalyzing change; and
 - Building and increasing community capacity to effectively reduce gun violence in the near-term and sustain its reduction.
 - program. In these cities, there is currently:
 - No current intentional focus on those thought to be directly involved in targeting near-term, recurrent gun violence;
 - A lack of capacity to provide the social and human services that deliver high impact outcomes for the target population;
 - An organizational fear of working with high risk (or dangerous) populations;
 - A lack of confidence by law enforcement that adequate, high-impact social services are available for targeted population to make a difference;
 - A neglect of the target population that has historically been neglected and/or underserved by the existing social and human services sectors;
 - A lack of trust by members of the target population in the current social and human services sectors; and
 - An increase in gun-violence, even where other targeted gun violence reduction strategies have been implemented (e.g., Community Policing, Ceasefire/Cure Violence, etc.)
- Boggan acknowledges that trying something new is often scary, even if it has proven effective elsewhere. But the AP has identified some common traits among the 38 cities across the U.S. that are exploring creating a local AP
- According to Boggan, "Advance Peace is attractive to cities because it is a proven model that effectively addresses root-causes to gun violence and those directly responsible for it." It works and Stockton should try it.

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Peace & Justice Network
of San Joaquin County

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SAVE THE DATES	CONTENTS	
Dec 1-2 31st annual Peaceful Holiday Faire Central Methodist Church	Homeless notesp 3	Tax cut helps who?p10-11
April 22, 2018 30th annual Earth Day Festival 11 am-4 pm Victory Park	McClintock forest storiesp 4	Palestine hopep 14
	Stop Site 300 pollutionp 7	Media control at stake.....p15
	Budgets and priorities.....p 9	



EDITOR'S LETTER

BRUCE GIUDICI

We find comfort in the familiar. Keeping things the same is appealing - no surprises, no drama.

With every year, however, the various changes we face are many - between people and peoples, organized and not.

In this issue, we witness the perspective of the homeless among us - voices that could come from you or me. And from some children writing about peace and smiles. When

we put ourselves into the worlds of others, we can understand the reasons for their actions.

When we enter a Palestinian village, we feel their frustration. When our health insurance is about to be taken to enrich the wealthy, we feel anger. When white mass murderers are "lone wolves," while Black People Matter protesters are framed as terrorists, we understand the hypocrisy. And when women's oppression and

We cannot allow the familiar to persist

abuse is only heard as a political argument rather than an abuse of basic human rights, we know the familiar and keeping things the same cannot stand.

We are once again entering a new year with extreme challenges - one in which we must create new realities from the wreckage of what has passed for normal. We cannot continue to treat human rights violations - from sexual harassment to gun violence to mass civilian casualties to ignoring refugee suffering

- as normal background noise. The escalating attack on the poor that enriches the wealthy cannot persist without an end that could turn violent. The constant preparation for war can only end in carnage and death, unless the more human and humane sides of our nature wrest control from those who profit from global insecurity and a callous disregard for human life. We cannot allow the familiar to persist - the costs have always been too high.

Into this new year,

please encourage your friends to empathize with those who we are so quick to judge as being flawed. If our true nature is good, we will find ways to help - and in helping others, we help ourselves and our friends become better people. And that is something to be thankful for. And in this season of giving, please consider donating to the Peace and Justice Network - for all the hope and connections we can muster.

Happy Winter!

Dreamer protection legislation comparison

HANNAH GRAF EVANS

Friends Committee on National Legislation advocates for Congress to pass legislation that offers immigrants who grew up in the United States and are undocumented - also known as Dreamers - an opportunity to work towards citizenship. FCNL's priorities for Dreamer protection legislation include:

- 1) Enacting a path to citizenship for the largest number of young immigrants who entered the United States as children and grew up here.
- 2) Outlining a path to citizenship that is swift and easy to navigate, without requiring Dreamers to fulfill excessive or harsh requirements.
- 3) Ensuring that Dreamers and other immigrants' safety and opportunities to access the U.S. immigration system are not threatened.
- 4) Enacting protections into law without exacerbating existing injustices within the U.S. immigration system, which currently separates families, keeps too many people in detention, and infringes upon the civil and human rights of immigrants and citizens alike.

Pertaining to these priorities, we put together a comparison of four different Dreamer protection bills - the BRIDGE Act, SUCCEED Act, RAC Act, and Dream Act. FCNL considers the eligibility provisions and pathway to citizenship outlined in the Dream Act to be the best option available for Dreamers. It is the only bipartisan bill with an identical version in both chamber

DEFINITIONS

CPR: Conditional Permanent Residency - This is a conditional status that requires individuals to stay in compliance with certain requirements. Both the SUCCEED and RAC Acts have bars for inadmissibility, deportability, and revocation of CPR status.

LPR: Lawful Permanent Residency - once applicants have accomplished certain requirements they can apply for LPR/a green card and then follow process to naturalization and citizenship.

MORE DETAILED ANALYSIS:
NATIONAL IMMIGRANT LAW CENTER, 2017
LEGISLATION TO PROTECT DACA RECIPIENTS/
IMMIGRANT YOUTH:
HTTPS://WWW.NILC.ORG/

AMERICAN IMMIGRATION LAWYERS ASSOCIATION
POLICY BRIEF: HOW DREAMER PROTECTION BILLS
MEASURE UP: HTTP://WWW.AILA.ORG/

Source: FCNL release 11/8/17
https://www.fcnl.org/

	The BRIDGE Act – H.R. 496 / S. 128	The SUCCEED Act – S. 1852	The Recognizing America's Children (RAC) Act – H.R. 1468	The Dream Act of 2017 – H.R. 3440 / S. 1615
Basic Requirements for Eligibility	Been in the country since June 15, 2007 and entered the country before age of 16 . (Aligns with the requirements of DACA.) Need to have earned a high school diploma, been honorably discharged from the military, or be in school.	Must have been in the country since June 15, 2012 and entered the country before the age of 16 . Under age 31 on June 15, 2012. Need to be in college, have earned a high school diploma, or served in the military. If under 18, must be in school.	Must have been in the country since January 1, 2012 and entered the country before the age of 16 . Need to be in college, have earned a high school diploma, or have valid work authorization. If under 18, exempted from initial requirement.	Must have been in the country for 4 years before the enactment of the bill and entered the country before the age of 18 . Need to be admitted to college, have earned a high school diploma, or be enrolled in school. DACA recipients are automatically eligible.
Earliest Possible Eligibility to Apply for Citizenship	None. Extends temporary protection from deportation and work authorization for three years.	After 15 years including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Required 5 year CPR- Renewed 5 year CPR- 5 years LPR	After 10 years including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Required 5 year CPR- Renewed CPR- 5 years LPR	After 5 years Individuals who have been granted CPR and satisfied all requirements could apply for LPR.
Stages and Requirements to adjust status	N/A	Individuals must first sign a waiver barring them from future immigration eligibility if they violate terms of CPR. Once approved for initial CPR they must maintain it for a required 5 years. Individuals must complete certain requirements to reapply for a secondary CPR for another required 5 years. Individuals must stop accessing certain public benefits to qualify for the second CPR. Before being eligible to apply for a green card/LPR, they must complete additional work, education, or military requirements. They must maintain LPR status for 5 years before applying for naturalization.	Individuals must maintain initial CPR for a required 5 years and complete certain requirements to reapply to renew CPR for up to 5 years Before being eligible to apply for a green card/LPR, individuals must complete additional work, education, or military requirements. They must maintain LPR status for 5 years before applying for naturalization.	After obtaining initial CPR status, individuals must complete certain work, education, or military requirements before being eligible to apply for LPR. Individuals can maintain initial CPR status for up to 8 years. Time in CPR status counts towards 5 year permanent residence requirement for naturalization.



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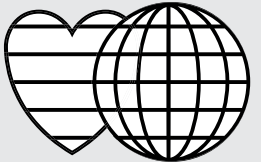
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Notes from our homeless



FRED MUSKAL

NOTE: FRED MUSKAL HAS BEEN LEADING A MONTHLY WRITING CLASS AT ST. MARY'S DINING HALL FOR THE PAST FEW MONTHS. BELOW IS A SAMPLE OF THE WORK THE WRITERS HAVE PRODUCED:

IF I PLAY MY CARDS RIGHT YAUMED HILL

On my way to St. Mary's for the upteenth time to eat lunch, wondering where I'm going to rest my head for the evening, everything is a blur recalling yesterday, when my brother was living. Things were a hell of a lot easier, but now a days life seems empty. Get my tray and start eating, pondering on the thought of leaving and moving out of state, but second thoughts tell me no. Feel I must find a job soon if I play my cards right. Exit the dining hall on my way to the library, like to sit.

LIKE PRISON RAUL LOMAS

I've been living here about two months and I have to say that it's kind of like when I was in prison living with all these men. I mean like people fighting. It's kind of loud sometimes, and shaving with a lot of men. It's like a program, you can say, a time to do this and a time to do that, but it's OK because I've done it before, living with a bash of men. It's OK for me.

THEY CARE ABOUT US AS PEOPLE JO PINE

Well, since I have been homeless, I have met a lot of people that has come through these streets of Stockton, CA. I've met people that drink, some do drugs, and some that just has no place to turn to. Me myself, I had nowhere to go, so I heard about St. Mary's, so I have it a try. That was back in 2015. Now it's the end of 2017. Staff here are very helpful and they show they care a lot about all of us as people.

WHAT IS HOMELESS? PAULINE

It is a person who has no home to go to. For example, your family does not like the person you are with because they think he takes advantage of me, which is wrong. So I had nowhere to go; that is why I am homeless, but not for long. I meet nice homeless people that have a lot of problems. You have to sleep on the floor in the overflow room and they said it had bed bugs, which I never saw.

Every time I talk to one, they have a lot of reasons why they are at the shelter, and the staff are sometimes

mean because they have too many people. One condition is that you have to be drug tested, which is good, but it don't do any good. People like that don't care if they can get away with doing that.

And also they have yuckey food. A dog doesn't even like it. They need to have better food. It gave me the poops. So there.

EVERY THING FOR A REASON NIJAAN LANE

I myself believe that every thing happens for a reason. Sometimes God places us in different places for certain reasons. We may not know at the time why. This is when we should practice Spiritual Solitude.

During this time we should reflect on our inner selves, become closer to God and build a stronger connection with Him. As humans, we will always fall short, because, simply put, we are not perfect. But we should still try to be more like him and learn from our mistakes.

In some instances, if/when we become homeless, our surroundings tend to make us feel as we are not as good. Or, that God has forsaken us. But, as they say, "The master is always quiet during a test."

Instead, we should still look to him. I see being homeless as a chance to do something new; wipe the slate clean. This makes me happy. My soul rejoices because God continues to see something within me that's worth saving. So I stay in my Bible because it's my owner's manual. How else will I know my purpose for being here?

THE DAY THAT I FELL IN LOVE VIRGINIA A. BROWN

My name is Virginia A. Cope-Van Duren. I am a carney. I set up carnival rides for a living. I work 11 months out of the year. I travel all around the state of California and out of state also.

How I became homeless. Back in October of last year, 2016, I decided to move all of my personal property out of the house. I also decided to divorce my so-called husband Andy. You see my ex-husband Andy is a drug addict. History was not going to repeat itself again.

After the carnival season was over last year I had no place to go and call home any more. My cats and I were sleeping in my mini-van. My ex-boy friend allowed me to stay with him and his friends. Through my ex-boy friend I was introduced to St. Mary's. This is where I met the love of my life and future husband, Willie. On 11/27/2016 I fell in love with a beautiful person named Willie. From this day on, I still have a huge school girl crush on this person. I also have a very special loving bond that nobody can break or take away from me. Every day we grow closer together. Each day is a beautiful day with him and our

two cats named Walrus and Pocahontas.

We have our good days and we have our bad days, but we just grow stronger. I thank God every day for bringing this beautiful person into my life. He is my Butter Cup and my husband, who I love so much.

I want to grow old with him, make many memories with him, enjoy life with him, and so on. I have never been so happy in my life. I thank God every day and every night for bringing Willie into my life. What did I do to deserve this beautiful, special gift from you, God? As of today, we have a place to call home.

WE THINK OF IT AS CAMPING CHRIS GREANEY

I'm talking about the reason I'm homeless. I had a house with my mom in Oakland. My mom died five years ago and our house was foreclosed.

We had four rescued dogs and three rescued cats. Stockton was the only place for me and my mom's animals could go live. I got a trailer and moved into a warehouse lot to be secure for the warehouse.

I have been here for four years. I used to have my trailer plugged in the warehouse for electricity, but the warehouse P.G. & E. got turned off as well as the water. We just think of it as camping.

So I'm going to try to be a pet groomer. I don't know how good I will be because all my animals have short hair and most animals that go to pet groomers have long hair. I will start training next week.

Contact Your Reps

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Sen. Kamala Harris, 501 I Street, Suite 7-600, Sacramento 95814 916-448-2787, fax 202-228-3865; 112 Hart Building, Washington, DC 20510. 202-224-3553, senator@harris.senate.gov ; Twitter: @senkamalaharris

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McClintock forest lore misleads

JOHN BUCKLEY, CSERC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Recently Congressman Tom McClintock delivered a speech in Congress concerning forests. He made a number of generalized statements that imply certain “facts” that are simply not true. His key theme was that environmental laws “are literally killing our forests.” A second key theme was that tying forest problems to climate change doesn’t pass the smell test. And a third key claim was that private forests can easily be seen as properly managed and are green, healthy, and thriving in direct contrast to “neglected” federal lands. All the above are false.

An additional incorrect claim made by the Congressman included: “Healthy trees can naturally resist bark beetles” - He made this statement as part of his claim that federal forests cannot be managed properly due to the laws now in place.

Whether a politician is a Democrat, a Republican, or an Independent, fact-checking claims is important if citizens are going to understand whether or not to believe the politician.

MCCLINTOCK: ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS “ARE LITERALLY KILLING OUR FORESTS.”

The Congressman blames the National Environmental Policy Act and the Endangered Species Act for being responsible for less logging on national forest lands than occurred decades ago. He asserts that the drop in logging is directly connected to the increase in forest fires.

In reality, up through the early 1990’s, despite NEPA and the Endangered Species Act, the Forest Service was cutting huge quantities of trees – primarily through clearcutting and similar even-age logging that removed all large fire-resistant trees. Clearcut areas were planted with tightly packed tree plantations. Areas that were selectively high-graded through logging of their biggest, most profitable trees were left unmanaged. The small and some mid-size trees left behind all grew densely into thickets.

Even as far back as 1987, wildfires in the Stanislaus Forest combined to burn almost 150,000 acres of land – much of it at high severity. This was during the peak of logging in the Sierra Nevada. Such intense logging did nothing to prevent the second largest wildfire to ever burn in the local region. Logging done to maximize wood production does not result in fire safe forests.

The combination of clearcuts (that transformed the forest into up to 40-acre blocks of tree plantations) along with the high-graded logged forest stands being allowed to become dense thickets of smaller trees all ended up creating a massive fire risk. This was not due to environmental laws. It was the result of the Forest Service responding to pressure from the timber industry to maximize high levels of logging.

In the 1990’s environmental laws did begin to curtail clearcuts and the cutting of the remaining large, fire-resistant trees. But for economic as well as social reasons, Forest Service staffing was reduced so that when the Forest Service attempted to shift to aggressively thinning the forests to protect at-risk wildlife, the amount of acres that were “treated” ended up being far less than desired by the Forest Service..

Reduced Forest Service staffing, reduced interest by the timber industry in smaller diameter trees, and inadequate budgets from Congress for the Forest Service all resulted in fewer forest treatments to thin forest stands to reduce the risk of severe wildfires. Thus, more and more forest areas became overgrown tree plantations or overgrown second-growth forest stands.

In Congressman McClintock’s district in the Stanislaus National Forest, for more than 15 years, local environmental groups have supported more thinning logging to reduce overgrown forests. Such projects haven’t been stopped by the Endangered Species Act or by environmental laws. The Forest Service’s inadequate staffing and

low budgets have limited the ability for the Stanislaus Forest to prepare and administer projects and to get the forest logged selectively.

There are many causes for why local forests have generally gotten more and more unhealthy. But the Con-



gressman falsely attempts to pick environmental laws as the culprit.

MCCLINTOCK: LETTING FIRES BURN WILL ONLY RESULT IN DAMAGING WILDFIRES

The Congressman attacked proposals to allow more use of fire to reduce the risk of devastating wildfires. The reality is that fuels in forests will always burn at some point – either through low-intensity prescribed burn projects under safe conditions or – at the other end of the spectrum – though blazing high-severity wildfires that kill people and destroy communities.

Fire historically burned hundreds of thousands of acres of Sierra Nevada forests every year, creating open, park-like forests with scattered individual trees, openings, and clumps of trees. Despite unchecked wildfires, the historic forests of the region were amazing in their beauty, health, and resilience to wildfires and drought. As scientists have proven through studies, such frequently burned forest areas were highly resistant to being severely burned.

The Congressman pointed to devastating fires that have been the focus of the media. Exceptional fire conditions such as the Santa Rosa – Napa firestorms have nothing to do with national forest management. Literally the wind-blown raging fires in that region burned cement buildings, K-Marts and other industrial structures. Nothing in their path escaped firestorm devastation. But for the vast majority of wildfires, having thinned, prescribed burned forest areas will make areas highly safe from damaging wildfire effects.

MCCLINTOCK: CLIMATE CHANGE THEORIES DON'T PASS THE SMELL TEST, AND CLEARLY CLIMATE CHANGE ISN'T THE CAUSE OF DESTRUCTIVE FOREST FIRES AND INSECTS

Depending on which sources you rely on, either most or nearly all of the last 15 years have been the warmest recorded years globally ever documented. Science studies prove that fire seasons have expanded over the long summer-fall season by up to 7 weeks longer each year for forests across the West. That alone makes a huge difference for everything from drier forest fuels to more days with fire risk. The recent multi-year drought affecting the Sierra Nevada was documented as off the scale compared to previous droughts, and the spread of bark beetles due to the stressed trees resulted in the highest level of bark beetle damage in the Sierra Nevada ever recorded.

Accordingly, it is blindly political for the Congressman to scorn scientists who point to climate change and warming conditions as contributing to the severity of Western wildfires. A significant shift to hotter and drier weather conditions for the Sierra Nevada is fact, not conjecture. The accompanying die-off of over 100 mil-

lion trees from drought and bark beetles occurred where trees were widely spaced... where trees were isolated, where trees were in dense thickets, and where trees were in industrial timberlands. Healthy trees as well as stressed trees died from bark beetles whenever numbers of beetles were excessive.

There is literally no factual truth to the Congressman’s claims that private forests are green and thriving while public forests are neglected and suffering. Bark beetles hit private and public forest lands across middle and lower elevations of the Sierra Nevada equally hard. Private lumber companies simply had the funding, staffing, and capacity to salvage log their lands more rapidly than the Forest Service was able to do. Many of the most at-risk forest lands in the Sierra Nevada are the blocks of even-age tree plantations that are so at risk for windblown crown fires.

The truth is that drought, climate change, and a cumulative combination of human actions over the past century have all added up to cause often-unhealthy forest conditions.

A politician can attempt to misinform the public and take advantage of media coverage concerning wind-blown firestorms in oak woodlands and brushlands far from national forest lands, or that same politician could instead admit that inadequate budget funding by Congress for the Forest Service is a continuing major barrier to getting consensus-based forest projects funded so that all political interests can collaboratively support real solutions.

Issues tied to forests are not simplistic. But moving past rhetoric to reach across party lines to attempt to create balanced solutions could be a step in the right direction.

Source: Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center 11/7/17
http://www.cserc.org/

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EDITORS NOTE: FRIENDS FOR PEACE RECENTLY HELD AN ESSAY CONTEST IN STOCKTON, WITH PROMPTS AROUND SMILING, HAPPINESS AND, FOR SOME, THE FIRST SENTENCE OF THE FOLLOWING ESSAY. WHILE THE WORKS OF YOUNGER WRITERS TOUCHED ON THE HAPPIER TOPICS (SEE THE ADJOINED BOX), A DISTRESSING NUMBER OF ESSAYS WRITTEN BY SIXTH AND SEVENTH GRADERS WERE DARKER IN TONE. THE FOLLOWING IS AMONG THE DARKEST, BUT HOPEFULLY PROVIDES A GLIMPSE OF REALITIES SOME OF OUR CHILDREN FACE DAILY - REALITIES WE CAN CHANGE ONCE WE BECOME AWARE OF THEM.

The day I got Chicke

AMARE, 3RD GRADE

I was happy a lot of times. But the one time I was really happy was when I got another toy chicken named Chicke. I think that was the best time of my life. I cannot describe how happy I was.

One Friday I was sick. My grandpa and grandma came over. Grandma had a flat package. Grandma said "Does Amare like chickens?" "Yes," I said. Grandma said "Then here you go!" I had no idea this would be one of the best presents ever.

"Wow!" I said. "Thanks grandma!"

"You're welcome," she said. It was a Chicke, just like the one I had lost. I was so happy I almost cried. After that, I was playing with Chicke. I put him on my finger. I said to my sister, "Do you like Chicke?" She replied, "Yes." Pretty soon I was pretending he was flying on my finger. That was a time I felt happy. I felt so good. I was so happy that I played with him the whole day.

Grit in the garden...and everywhere else

SHAYNE ZURILGEN, PUENTES

I recently read Angela Duckworth's book *Grit: the Power of Passion and Perseverance*. You should read it if you want to get your wig blown back. The central concept is this idea of grit which Duckworth defines as follows: "Grit is passion or perseverance for very long term goals. Grit is having stamina. Grit is sticking with your future, day in and day out – not just for a day, not just for a month, but for years – to make that future a reality."

Folks come up to me at the farmers market and tell me that my tomatoes are amazing. They tell me how they have grown tomatoes but they aren't as good or that they just died. Then they ask me how I get these amazing tomatoes. "What is your secret? It must be your soil," they will say or, "You must have a green thumb." They don't realize it, but these assumptions are dismissive. What I have, in spades, is grit. My soil is very good...because I have intentionally improved it over time. I don't have a green thumb...I have spent years learning from my failures.

So, here are a few ways you can become a grittier gardener.

First understand this: there is no such thing as a green thumb. In her book, Duckworth describes how we are often distracted by talent and assume that successful people have loads of it. She provides evidence to show that while talent is certainly helpful, many talented folks don't succeed without developing a strong work ethic. She asserts that effort counts twice. Many people who lack talent, but work hard at something in very specific ways, are successful.

The first time I planted a garden, every single plant died. The second time I planted a garden, 90% of it died. I viewed the second garden as a success. I had identified a problem, sought out a solution, implemented it, and improved...by 10%. Failures are way more informative than successes.

Observe your garden regularly. Look for insect damage, changes in leaf color and wilting. If you see these

things, read up on what may be causing them and see what can be done about it. Learn to identify insects, their different stages, eggs, poop, and how they damage the plant. Learn the good ones from the bad ones. Find ways to encourage the good ones. And most importantly, never let a plant die without figuring out why it died. If you know that reason, you can implement a change that will result in a better outcome. Success comes incrementally over years. If you lose a tomato crop, you probably won't have a chance to try again for another year – so don't waste the opportunity to learn from that failure.

I'm not the guy who is going to tell you that everyone can garden. Successful gardeners are passionate about growing. It is a lot of work to get a few tomatoes. It takes grit. If you are not interested in the puzzle of growing your own food, if you are not willing to fail...you might be better off planting an azalea and going to the grocery store.



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Shower me in pain

ALINA CLARK, 7TH GRADE

Kim was young and never smiled or laughed. Kim's dad died when she was eight years old. Then two years later Kim's mom married a guy named Tyler. Tyler was a gangster, but Kim's mom didn't know. When Kim's mom went to work, Tyler would abuse her. Even when Kim didn't do anything to Tyler, he would threaten to kill her. Then one day, Tyler cut off all of Kim's hair and told her mom that she cut off her hair and tried to kill him. Kim told her mom it was a lie, but she didn't believe her. So everyday Kim was abused by Tyler. Kim was always late to school. One day Kim's teacher pulled Kim to the side and asked her why do you have bruises. Kim told her teacher what happened and she called the police to do a search. When the police got there it was all clean and clear. Tyler was dressed nice and he cleaned the house. Tyler told the police that Kim is taking time to like me. so the police left and so did the teacher. Then Tyler slapped Kim. He told her, "Don't you ever tell anyone or I will murder you."

So Kim kept quiet. Kim wanted to tell her mom so bad, but she was scared. One day, when Tyler had to leave for a few hours and it was just Kim and her mom, Kim told her mom everything. Kim showed her mom the bruises. So Kim's mom called Tyler and asked him if he was abusing her daughter. Then all of a sudden there was a huge bang on the door. It was Tyler. He grabbed Kim's mom by the neck and slammed her on the wall. Then he put a gun to her head and shot her.

Kim ran away as fast as she could. Kim ran into a dead end. She hid under a rock. Then all of a sudden she saw a glowing figure. For some reason Kim didn't feel scared. Kim felt a slight happiness because she knew her parents were together. then Kim ran to the nearest police station and told them everything. Right away the police when looking for Tyler. They found him and arrested him. Kim went with the police to call a family member. Her uncle and aunt who lived 30 minutes away came to take care of Kim. Today was a happy but sad day for Kim. She knew her parents were together and safe.

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HASSAN EL-TAYYAB

The escalating war of words between Trump and Kim Jong-un has put the world in more imminent danger of nuclear holocaust than at any time since the end of the Cold War. The US should revisit a vital proposal, known as the "freeze for freeze" approach, which offers the best hope for jump starting diplomacy with North Korea and turning our nation back from the brink.

Under this proposal, the US and South Korea would freeze their joint military exercises in the region in exchange for North Korea freezing its testing of ballistic missiles and nuclear warheads. This would achieve highly desirable goals for both nations, namely assurances for the US that North Korea is not making progress towards a nuclear-tipped ICBM that can reliably strike the US mainland, and assurances for North Korea that the US and South Korea are not preparing for war.

North Korea has already voiced willingness to consider a "freeze for freeze" approach. During a June 21 interview, North Korean Ambassador Key Chun-yong explained that "Under certain circumstances, we are willing to talk in terms of freezing nuclear testing or missile testing. For instance, if the American side completely stops big, large-scale military exercises temporarily or permanently, then we will also temporarily stop." Russia and Germany have also voiced support of this proposal, as have American nuclear policy experts like former Secretary of Defense William Perry.

While many believe the "freeze for freeze" approach is viable, current administration officials have so far balked at the notion. US Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley for ex-

ample called the "freeze for a freeze" strategy "insulting," arguing that "when a rogue regime has a nuclear weapon and an [intercontinental ballistic missile] pointed at you, you do not take steps to lower your guard. ... No one would do that. We certainly won't." That thinking conveniently ignores that North Korean strategists are more or less saying the same thing about their nuclear and ballistic missile tests, which they see as their "guard" against US intervention.

Fortunately, at least in this case, President Trump is known for his willingness to alter his positions on long-held policy positions. And despite publicly chiding Secretary of State Rex Tillerson for "wasting his time" in pursuit of dialogue with North Korea, Tillerson has since said that the president "has made it clear to me to continue my diplomatic efforts, which we are, and I've told others those diplomatic efforts will continue until the first bomb drops."

The administration's current approach – military posturing, threats and sanctions – has only served to exacerbate tensions and increase the risk of accidental conflict. Diplomacy is still the best and only viable option for addressing concerns over North Korea's nuclear weapons program, and the "freeze for freeze" approach is still our best hope for getting the conversation started.

Hassan El-Tayyab is the policy and organizing director of Chicago Area Peace Action <http://chipeaceaction.org>



Source: Buzzflash at Truthout 11/13/17
<http://truth-out.org/buzzflash>

Pope denounces 'mentality of fear' caused by nuclear regimes, urges disarmament

JULIA CONLEY

At a Vatican seminar attended by Nobel Peace Prize winners, United Nations officials, and representatives from countries with nuclear capabilities, Pope Francis urged leaders to move towards nuclear disarmament on Friday.

The pontiff's speech came a week after he made a plea for an end to "useless massacres" in an anti-war speech at a military cemetery in Italy, in which he alluded to the rising tensions between the U.S. and North Korea, exacerbated in recent months by President Donald Trump's bellicose threats in response to Kim Jong-un's nuclear tests.

Pope Francis argued that the insistence on maintaining nuclear arsenals by nations including the United States, North Korea, and France "creates nothing but a false sense of security," and therefore total disarmament

is the only acceptable solution.

Nuclear weapons, he said, "exist in the service of a mentality of fear that affects not only the parties in conflict but the entire human race. International relations cannot be held captive to military force, mutual intimidation, and the parading of stockpiles of arms."

"Weapons that result in the destruction of the human race are senseless even from a tactical standpoint," added the pope.

Pope Francis also expressed "gratitude and appreciation" for the U.N.'s recent treaty calling for an elimination of nuclear weapons. The agreement was adopted in July, but all the nuclear states abstained from voting. So far, three parties have ratified the treaty.

The seminar signified a shift in the Catholic Church's tolerance of the existence of nuclear programs. Bishops in the U.S. expressed a "strictly conditional moral acceptance of deterrence" but the Pope's recent remarks indicate that the conditions may now call for a policy change.

"The church's tolerance of deterrence was predicated on it being a step toward disarmament," said Stephen Colecchi, director of the U.S. bishops' conference's Office of International Justice and Peace, in an interview with the National Catholic Reporter. Today, regimes are "planning modernization of nuclear weapons. You don't modernize a weapons system that you intend to disarm from. So I think deterrence is on very thin moral grounds."

Source: Common Dreams 11/10/17
<https://www.commondreams.org/>

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Nuclear weapons and pollution in the Central Valley

California's Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory was founded in 1952 to compete with the Los Alamos Lab in New Mexico in the creation of new nuclear warheads and bombs. Every nuclear weapon in the U.S. arsenal was developed at either Los Alamos or Livermore Lab. Many Northern Californians are familiar with Livermore Lab's Main Site, situated on the eastern edge of the City of Livermore. Fewer are aware that since 1955 Livermore Lab has also operated an 11-square mile high explosives testing range along San Joaquin County's western border near Tracy. This experimental test facility for nuclear bomb components is called "Site 300."

Site 300 operations have included open-air blasts with high explosives and radioactive materials used in nuclear weapons. Site 300 activities have polluted soil, surface water, springs and regional groundwater aquifers with chemical and radioactive wastes including solvents, dioxins, furans, PCBs, perchlorate, high explosive compounds, radioactive hydrogen (also called tritium) and uranium-238, a heavy metal with a radioactive half-life of 4.5 billion years. Releases to the environment at Site 300 occurred from a variety of accidents, spills, leaking pipes, leaching from unlined toxic dumps, open-air blasts with high explosives detonating chemical and radioactive bomb components, and disposal of liquid wastes in lagoons and dry wells (sumps).

Many of these activities and the dangers they pose continue today. Current Site 300 operations include high explosives research and machining, contained detonations, open-air blasts with high explosives and toxic materials, explosive and hazardous waste burning, and radioactive and hazardous waste storage. Prevailing winds blow contamination into the Central Valley. An off-site groundwater plume contaminated with solvents has migrated from Site 300 and traveled under Corral Hollow Road and the nearby Corral Hollow Creek. Over the years Tracy has expanded westward toward Site 300, and Tracy Hills, a new residential development of 5,500 homes near the Site 300 boundary, was recently approved for construction.

SUPERFUND DESIGNATION

In 1990, Site 300 was placed on the Environmental Protection Agency's "Superfund" list of most heavily contaminated sites in the nation because, for example, drinking the water from wells near the fence line was estimated to cause an additional cancer per every hundred people due to the pollution. The Site 300 Superfund cleanup is slated to take up to 80 more years - and it will cost nearly \$2 billion - according to the Department of Energy National Nuclear Security Administration, which is the agency that owns the site. Moreover, new discoveries of contamination at Site 300 may increase the cleanup time and costs. To cite one example, in 2014 site employees were routinely sampling groundwater when they spotted chunks of uranium-238 (also called depleted uranium or DU) littering the surface soil around a firing table called B-851. The employees found 27 pieces of uranium measuring 3-inches or more in diameter and weighing a total of 80 pounds. There is no question that open-air explosive testing was the cause of the contamination. B-851 is the second open-air firing table at Site 300 found to have large amounts of uranium-238 strewn around it. What is not known is how much uranium-238 is there in finely divided particles due to the blasts. Nor do we know how much - or how far - the particles of this radioactive and chemically hazardous material have traveled with the wind.

Initial soil characterization, completed last year, showed elevated levels of radioactivity. The Phase One soil sampling was limited to a 700-foot radius around the firing table because there are special status species and endangered habitat in the area. A larger survey will require a Biological Opinion from the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Also of concern is that Site 300 conducts regular "controlled burns" around this firing table, raising the issue of re-suspension in thick smoke of tiny particles of

uranium-238. Firing tables at Site 300 are outdoor, gravel-based detonation pads on which personnel set off bomb blasts to test how well a new or modified bomb design performs. Photos we have obtained show that these blasts are huge, with dust and debris dwarfing nearly structures. (see photo)

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Tri-Valley CAREs recently organized a community-wide forum at the Tracy City Hall to discuss Site 300. Valeria Salamanca, a Tracy resident and the group's young, bilingual outreach specialist, spoke about the importance of including the public in the decision making process. She noted in particular that Spanish speaking have been left out. The Lab has not translated any of its materials into Spanish although nearly 40% of Tracy residents are Latino/Hispanic. Andrew Bain, the EPA Region IX project manager for the Site 300 Superfund cleanup, discussed the agency's role and provided slides on public participation as well as an overview map of contamination at the site. Peter Strauss, an environmental scientist under contract to Tri-Valley CAREs, presented a new report, "State of the Superfund Cleanup," and added critical information about Site 300 pollutants, key issues in the cleanup and the risks to human health and the environment if the cleanup is not complete. As the group's executive director, I rounded out the panel by offering a community-based perspective. I cited examples of how public involvement has improved the site 300 cleanup in the past - and why it is needed now.

Tri-Valley CAREs aims to improve the quality and quantity of the Superfund cleanup at Site 300. We believe that the remedy choices and cleanup levels chosen must reflect the entire community's input, not just that of the polluter and the federal and state regulatory agencies. The public that bears the health risks must be given the tools and the opportunities to determine "how clean is clean?" and which technologies for conducting the cleanup are acceptable. It is important to realize that key cleanup decisions, including how much uranium-238 contamination will be left in place around the firing tables, have yet to be made.

A PETITION FOR THE FUTURE

A paradox exists at the heart of the Site 300 cleanup. While some areas are being remediated under the Superfund law, others parts of the site equally polluted are not undergoing cleanup - and this is due to ongoing nuclear weapons activities. In sum, Site 300 is being simultaneously polluted and cleaned up. The paradox becomes apparent at B-851 firing table where the 80 pounds of uranium-238 was discovered and decisions regarding additional characterization are pending. A September 2017 Site 300 report states that at B-851 any "required remediation to protect human health and the environment in the long term would not occur until the firing table is no longer active." Meanwhile, in another part of Site 300 a similar firing table used for uranium blasts, called B-812, has undergone extensive characterization for uranium-238 and other pollutants. A feasibility study is currently underway to analyze methods that might be utilized to clean it up. A proposed plan and public hearing will follow. The difference? The B-812 firing table closed after Tri-Valley CAREs and our San Joaquin County membership, friends and residents circulated a petition that caused the Lab to withdraw an application for a permit to undertake larger yield blasts. Long story short, once the firing table closed B-812 became part of the Superfund cleanup.

With this history in mind, Tri-Valley CAREs and its San Joaquin County members and friends are asking all area residents to sign a new petition to close Site 300's two remaining outdoor firing tables, the aforementioned B-851 and a second firing table used to detonate high explosive debris in the open air as a "waste management" activity. The petition is included on the page. Additional copies can be found on the group's website at [\[valleycares.org\]\(http://valleycares.org\). Multiple copies can be mailed on request by calling the office at \(925\) 443-7148 or sending email to \[marylia@trivalleycares.org\]\(mailto:marylia@trivalleycares.org\). Spanish language petitions and background materials are also available. To request a presentation to your group in Spanish, contact \[valeria@trivalleycares.org\]\(mailto:valeria@trivalleycares.org\). Tri-Valley CAREs plans to collect petitions until the firing tables close and become eligible for cleanup. The group invites your participation.](http://www.tri-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

Petition

To close the open-air toxic and explosive firing tables at Livermore Lab's Site 300

I call on Livermore Lab, the Dept. of Energy that owns the site, and state and federal environmental agencies to take immediate action to stop open-air explosions involving toxic materials and explosives at Site 300, on Corral Hollow Rd. near Tracy, CA

I note that...

The City of Tracy is expanding, and "Tracy Hills," a newly authorized development of 5,500 homes, will extend essentially to the Site 300 boundary;

Site 300 is a federal "Superfund" cleanup site with hazardous and radioactive pollution due to the site's open-air firing tables;

Two open-air firing tables at Site 300 remain active; on one, high explosive wastes are detonated, and, on the other, Site 300 experimental activities using numerous toxic and hazardous materials and high explosives are detonated together in the open air;

At one of the active open-air firing tables (called B-851) 80 pounds of radioactive uranium-238 was found scattered around the firing table from past experiments. Recent soil sampling at B-851 has uncovered additional particles of this radioactive metal;

A September 2017 Site 300 report states that at B-851 any "required remediation [cleanup] to protect human health and the environment in the long term would not occur until the firing table is no longer active..."

It is of the utmost urgency that these open-air firing tables be closed - and that cleanup of contaminants becomes the priority at Site 300.

SIGNED: _____

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY/ZIP: _____

My additional comment(s): _____

Return to:
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How to fix a broken Democratic Party

JAKE JOHNSON

Following a massive wave of progressive victories in elections throughout the U.S. earlier this week, Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) argued in a /Politico/ op-ed on Friday that the Democratic Party must embrace "fundamental reforms" and "welcome into its ranks millions of working people and young people" if it is to build on this grassroots momentum and overcome the "unprecedented crisis" posed by the Trump administration.

Sanders' plea for systemic change within the party that has been decimated at nearly every level of government over the past eight years comes just ahead of the final meeting of the DNC's "Unity Reform Commission," a group formed in the aftermath of the 2016 Democratic primary with the stated goal of "ensur[ing] that inclusivity is upheld in all things that we do."

Some of the reforms Sanders says the commission "desperately" needs to consider during its December meeting if it is to have any hope of defeating Trump's "agenda of the billionaire class" include:

- Reducing the power of superdel-

egates, which currently have "the power to control the nominating process and ignore the will of voters";

- "Making voting easier, and not harder" by "ending the absurdity of closed primary systems" that lock out independent voters and fully embracing "universal and same-day voter registration";

- Developing a process that makes it easier for working people and students to participate in the voting process in states that use caucuses "even if they are not physically able to attend a caucus"; and

- "Fully appreciat[ing] Donna Brazile's revelations and understand the need for far more transparency in the financial and policy workings of the Democratic Party." Brazile, Sanders wrote, "exposed the rot."

The Democratic Party, Sanders argues, "cannot remain an institution largely dominated by the wealthy and inside-the-Beltway consultants" if it is to defeat Trump's "reactionary agenda"—which includes massive tax breaks for the wealthy coupled with enormous cuts to life-saving social programs.

It is "not acceptable" that "hundreds of

"Do you believe in open primaries, or do you not? Do you believe in transparency or not? Do you believe in keeping 700-plus superdelegates or not? Do you believe in letting people vote in caucuses who currently cannot?"

—SEN. BERNIE SANDERS

millions of dollars flow in and out of the DNC with little to no accountability," Sanders writes. "At a time when we have a Republican president and Republican Party whose leadership and agenda are strongly opposed by the American people, now is the time for real change. It is critical that

we come together and reform the Democratic Party. When we do that, we will win local, state, and national elections and transform our country."

In addition to pressuring the Democrats to support his proposed reforms in op-eds and interviews with major news outlets, Sanders also began circulating a petition Thursday calling on DNC chair Tom Perez to work toward making the party "as open, as inclusive, and as progressive as it can possibly be."

Sanders told the /Washington Post/ that the petition had already garnered tens of thousands of signatures just hours after going live.

"Do you believe in open primaries, or do you not? Do you believe in transparency or not? Do you believe in keeping 700-plus superdelegates or not? Do you believe in letting people vote in caucuses who currently cannot?" Sanders said, outlining the basic questions underlying his proposed reforms. "Those are the issues."

Source: Common Dreams 11/10/17
<https://www.commondreams.org/>

Congress: reclaiming constitutional war authority

SUSAN NAHVI

The 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force has provided three presidents with a blank check to wage war without congressional review or approval as required by the U.S. Constitution. But in the last few months, members of Congress from both political parties are starting to question the endless expansion of U.S. wars. This week, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee begins a series of hearings with administration officials that FCNL hopes will lead to the mark up of legislation repealing the 2001 and 2002 Authorizations for Use of Military Force (AUMF).

These hearings come on the heels of Rep. Barbara Lee (CA-13) introducing an amendment to the Defense Appropriations Bill that called for repealing the 2001 AUMF. Rep. Lee's amendment was adopted by the House Appropriations Committee, but House leadership stripped the amendment from the RY2018 Defense Appropriations Bill. In the U.S. Senate, Sen. Rand Paul (KY) forced a vote on an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act, which also called for a repeal of the 2001 AUMF. While the Senate voted to table Sen.

Paul's amendment, these are critical first steps towards having a full debate on endless war.

2001 BLANK CHECK FOR WAR

According to the Congressional Research Service, President Bush, Obama and Trump have all used the 2001 AUMF as a source of authority to conduct at least 37 military actions in 14 different countries. These numbers come from unclassified documents, so we do not know whether more actions might have been taken. The 2001 AUMF has no geographic restrictions, which is dangerous, as this has allowed presidential administrations to take military action wherever they have seen fit while claiming they do not have to consult Congress. The 2001 AUMF also does not have a sunset clause, meaning that it has no expiration date.

For 16 years, the executive branch has continued to use this bill as the basis for military actions around the world. Without repeal, there is no end in sight.

Effectively, Congress has abdicated its war authority and its duty to decide when and where the United States goes to war. Article I section 8 of the Constitution states that "The Congress shall have

power to declare war," and yet, Congress has not held a full debate in 16 years on whether our country should expand its military operations into new countries or continue to wage these wars at all.

This is why it is so important that Congress is starting a serious debate about when, where, and why the U.S. goes to war. On October 30th, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee will hold the first of a series of hearings on these issues. Now is the time to take action. Write to your senators in response to their votes on Sen. Paul's repeal amendment, and tell them that you are tired of endless war. Urge your members of Congress to support efforts to repeal the 2001 AUMF.

SUSAN NAHVI ADVOCATES ON BEHALF OF FCNL IN THE AREA OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES. SHE CONCENTRATES ON SEVERAL ISSUES, INCLUDING THE MUSLIM TRAVEL BAN, ISLAMOPHOBIA, AND SYRIAN REFUGEES. SHE WRITES ARTICLES THAT APPEAR ON FCNL'S WEBSITE, LOBBIES MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, AND SUPPORTS THE WORK OF LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATIVE YASMINE TAEB.

Source: FCNL release 10/30/17
<https://www.fcnl.org/>

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Turning military spending into a budget for the people?

FRIDA BERRIGAN

Connecticut is the only state in the union that does not have a budget, and the state's bills are being paid in emergency supplementals – or going past due. The state is budget-less, so my town of New London – one of its smaller urban communities – doesn't have a budget either. That means a hiring freeze at our local schools, budget cuts and tax increases from City Council, the farmer's markets not accepting senior citizen vouchers this summer, the downtown library cutting its hours, a smaller pool of money to pay for the heating needs of low-income people this winter and several other important city-funded offerings.

So far, this belt tightening has resulted in longer lines at the food pantries and an added weight of stress to already vulnerable and burdened people. Eventually, if it goes on long enough, the people impacted by these cuts – and the bigger ones on the horizon – will look across our river to the big industrial facilities that mar our otherwise beautiful view. The General Dynamics Electric Boat corporation isn't tightening its belt or trimming its excess or trying to make more with less.

It just got a \$5 billion contract to build a new class of nuclear-powered, nuclear-armed submarines.

Have you been worried about the United States not having enough nuclear submarines? Me neither. But Electric Boat is booming. The same can be said for most of the bad old military-industrial complex. President Trump's 2018 budget is a brutal behemoth that proposes giving more than \$700 billion to the military – a lot of it going right into the very pockets of the military-industrial complex.

That would be bad enough, but the problem isn't that we are spending more on the military – it's that it comes at the expense of just about every social good imaginable. Over the next decade, the Republican-held White House and Congress are planning over \$5 trillion in cuts to the safety net.

Comparisons to the military budget abound: We spend more than the next seven nations combined; one year of military spending could hire every unemployed person in the United States and put them to work in a high paid infrastructure rebuilding job; if you took the military budget in \$100 bills it

would circle the equator 500 times. (OK, I made that last one up.) But here is one that is pretty profound: According to the math of Alex Emmons, a reporter for The Intercept, just the increase to the military budget from 2017 to 2018 (\$80 billion) that the Senate approved would be enough to make "public colleges and universities in America tuition free."

Let's pause here. The budget situation in Connecticut is so severe that one version of the budget being promoted by state Republicans would cut hundreds of millions of dollars in state funding for the University of Connecticut system. University representatives and Democratic leaders responded by saying that such cuts would essentially shutter institutions where lower-income, first generation students seek higher education. Why cry poverty when there are billions that could be gleaned out of the military-industrial complex?

More than 100 representatives voted for the People's Budget earlier this month, which limits investment in the military and pumps money into jobs, education, health care and climate resiliency. Of course, the resolution was

not binding and was voted down by the House. Nevertheless, the ideas in the People's Budget provide a clear, concise plan for mobilizing the significant resources of the United States in the service of its people – which is kind of how it is supposed to be, right?

The document comes courtesy of the Congressional Progressive Caucus – they compile it every year – but it is more than a Washington effort. The breadth of organizational support for the People's Budget is impressive: from Planned Parenthood to Network: The Catholic Social Justice Lobby to VoteVets to Peace Action to dozens of other organizations representing the interests of hundreds of thousands of people, all setting aside policy differences to work together to achieve a different kind of national security.

Their aims include a \$2 trillion investment in America's energy, water and transportation systems; higher taxes on Wall Street firms and corporations that offshore jobs; a minimum wage hike and stronger union rights; auditing the Pentagon budget; and making debt-free college "a reality for all students."

According to the Eco-

nomics Policy Institute, the People's Budget would add 2.4 million jobs and increase GDP by 2 percent in the near term. And when it turns its attention to the military, the Progressive Caucus' budget "prohibits any expansion of US combat troops in Syria, prohibits an increase in defense spending and slashes wasteful Pentagon spending."

Peace Action senior director for policy and political affairs Paul Kawika Martin sees something fundamentally hopeful in this annual process. "Every year, it gets better," he said in a recent interview. "More Democrats vote for the People's Budget and we push the party closer to representing our ideals."

Up against the Pentagon's pervasive reach and endless resources – not to mention the military-industrial complex's practice of strategically citing its manufacturing in key congressional districts and spending millions on lobbying every year – this has to count as real progress.

Still, it can't just happen inside the Beltway. The People's Budget also provides an opportunity to organize locally and to ask the questions: What is security? How much should

it cost? Is it walls? Impregnable borders? Militarized police forces? Pervasive surveillance? Guns? Or is it local autonomy, affordable housing, accessible medical care, livable wages, truly representative government, and a sense of well-being that doesn't cost a lot, but sure is priceless? With the war in Afghanistan entering its 17th year, swaths of our country digging out of damage from fires and hurricanes, and communities trying to find sanity in the wake of another mass shooting, it is a critical question.

FRIDA BERRIGAN SERVES ON THE BOARD OF THE WAR RESISTERS LEAGUE, A 90-YEAR-OLD PACIFIST ORGANIZATION, AND HELPED TO FOUND WITNESS AGAINST TORTURE, A NONVIOLENT DIRECT ACTION GROUP FOCUSED ON SHUTTING DOWN GUANTÁNAMO AND ENDING TORTURE. SHE LONG SERVED AS A RESEARCHER AT THE NEW AMERICA FOUNDATION'S ARMS AND SECURITY INITIATIVE IN NEW YORK CITY, WRITING AND SPEAKING ON THE TOPIC OF MILITARISM. SHE WRITES THE "LITTLE INSURRECTIONS" BLOG FOR WAGING NONVIOLENCE.

Source: *Waging Non-violence* 10/28/17
<https://wagingnonviolence.org/>

Nation that says it can't afford Medicare for All has spent \$5.6 trillion on war since 9/11

ANDREA GERMANOS

A new analysis offers a damning assessment of the United States' so-called global war on terror, and it includes a "staggering" estimated price tag for wars waged since 9/11—over \$5.6 trillion.

The Costs of War Project at Brown University's Watson Center says the figure—which covers the conflicts in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, and Pakistan from 2001 through 2018—is the equivalent of more than \$23,386 per taxpayer.

The "new report," said Paul Kawika Martin, Peace Action's senior director for policy and political affairs, "once again shows that the true #costofwar represents a colossal burden to taxpayers on top of the tremendous human loss."

The center's figure is far greater than the \$1.5 trillion the Pentagon estimated in July for the costs of the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria, as it gives a fuller picture by including "war-related spending by the

State Department, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security," writes Neta C. Crawford, a professor of political science at Boston University.

Her report notes that even the \$5.6 trillion tally underestimates the true figures, as it doesn't capture "every budgetary expense related to these wars," such as state and local costs to take care of veterans; nor does it take into account the funds used for military equipment "gifts"

to countries involved in the conflicts.

"In sum," it states, "although this report's accounting is comprehensive, there are still billions of dollars not included in its estimate."

"As obscene as it is to waste so much money, it is more obscene to waste human life."

—WIN WITHOUT WAR

In addition, as the Washington, D.C.-based organization Win Without War notes, "let's not forget that when we talk about what war costs there are also human costs. As obscene as it is to waste so much money, it is more obscene to waste human life."

Crawford's report hammers home that point: "Moreover, a full accounting of any war's burdens cannot be placed in columns on a ledger. From the civilians harmed and displaced by violence, to the soldiers killed and wounded, to the children who play years later on roads and fields sown with improvised explosive devices and cluster bombs, no set of numbers can convey the human toll of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, or how they have

spilled into the neighboring states of Syria and Pakistan, and come home to the U.S. and its allies in the form of wounded veterans and contractors. Wars also entail an opportunity cost—what we might have done differently with the money spent and obligated and how veterans' and civilians' lives could have been lived differently."

Echoing a point made by other observers of failed U.S. counter-terrorism strategies, the report states that "the more people the U.S. kills, the more seem to join the organizations the U.S. was already fighting, even as new radical groups spring up."

The report also suggests the war costs will only continue to pile up: "There is no end in sight to the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan and the associated operations in Pakistan. Similarly, despite recent gains, there is little clear sense of how long the U.S. will be engaged in Iraq and Syria."

Reacting to the new report, William D. Hartung, director of the Arms and Security Project at the Center for International Policy, writes in an op-ed at *The Hill*: "Was this huge expenditure of blood and treasure worth it? Did it substantially reduce the risks of terrorism, or reduce the likelihood of future conflicts? The short answer is no."

Source: *Common Dreams* 11/8/17
<https://www.commondreams.org/>



13 terrible things about the Senate Republican tax plan

1. Gives most of the tax cuts to the richest 1%. The share of tax cuts going to the richest 1% is 62% in 2027, up from 18% in 2019. Their tax cut will be \$33,000 in 2027, on average. [Tax Policy Center (TPC)]

2. Raises taxes on 87 million middle-class families by 2027 to pay for tax breaks for the wealthy and corporations. That is one-half of all households making less than \$200,000 a year. 67 million households making less than \$100,000 a year would also pay more in taxes after the temporary tax cuts for individuals expire. [TPC]

3. Mandates automatic Medicare cuts of at least \$25 billion in 2018 and \$400 billion over 10 years. In effect, seniors will pay for tax breaks for corporations and the wealthy as automatic spending cuts are triggered by tax cuts that add \$1.4 trillion to deficits. Automatic cuts will total \$136 billion in 2018 and include cuts to agriculture subsidies, student loans, military retirement and more. [Congressional Budget Office (CBO)]

4. Pays for corporate tax cuts by raising health care premiums and leaving millions of families without health coverage. To raise revenue to pay for permanent corporate tax cuts, the plan repeals a key part of the Affordable Care Act—the requirement for individuals to have health coverage if they can afford it. This will lead to 13 million more people being uninsured and cause a 10% increase in health insurance premiums. [CBO]

The corporate tax rate is slashed from 35% to 20%, losing \$1.3 trillion. That's nearly equal to the \$1.5 trillion cut the Republican budget makes to Medicare (\$473 billion) and Medicaid (\$1 trillion). [Joint Committee on Taxation (JCT) and Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP)]

5. Makes corporate tax cuts permanent, but makes tax cuts for individuals and families temporary. All the tax cuts that benefit the middle-class will expire after 2025, while the corporate tax cuts are permanent. The plan makes permanent changes to the way tax brackets are adjusted for inflation, resulting in a growing tax increase over time. [CBPP]

6. Adds \$1.4 trillion to deficits jeopardizing critical services. The plan includes at least \$1.4 trillion in tax cuts that are not paid for by closing loopholes used by the wealthy and corporations. This will balloon the deficit and further endanger funding for Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, public education and more. [CBPP]

7. Puts wealthy business owners over seniors. Wealthy business owners and investors—including real estate developers like Donald Trump—get a \$362 billion tax cut from the effective drop in the top tax rate for “pass-through” business income from 39.6% to 32%. (Pass-throughs include partnerships, S corporations and sole proprietorships, and their owners pay taxes at the individual rate.) By comparison, the Republican budget cuts Medicare by \$473 billion. [JCT, TPC and CBPP]

8. Kills American jobs by encouraging outsourcing and profit shifting. The plan creates a territorial tax system, which exempts foreign profits from U.S. taxes. While the plan will tax some of those offshore profits, the effective tax rate will be far below the U.S. rate. U.S. multinationals will have even more tax incentives to outsource more jobs and shift more profits offshore.

9. Hands a \$565 billion tax cut to offshore tax dodgers. American corporations have \$2.6 trillion in profits stashed offshore on which they owe \$750 billion in U.S. taxes. Rather than make them pay what they owe, like all the rest of us do, the tax plan will charge them only \$185 billion—over a half-trillion-dollar discount. [Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy (ITEP) and JCT]

10. Repeals the federal deduction for state and local taxes (SALT) hurting the middle class. One-third of tax-

How to stop a tax plan rigged for the rich

SAM PIZZIGATI

The Earth doesn't quite shake when lawmakers in Washington, D.C. take one of their periodic votes on tax “reform.” But sometimes history does turn, and this coming week's expected vote on the Senate version of the GOP tax plan could be one of those rare times that history actually turns for the better.

Indeed, this year's situation bears a remarkable resemblance to the epic tax battle of 1932, a largely forgotten struggle that set the stage for an entire generation of increasing equality. Could this history repeat?

IT CERTAINLY IS ALREADY ECHOING.

Back in 1932, just as today, the Republican Party had a lockgrip on the White House and both houses of Congress. Then as now, America's wealthy lusted for fundamental tax changes that would significantly reduce their already reduced tax burden. Then as now, those wealthy — and the pols they subsidized — framed tax breaks for the rich as our only road to prosperity.

That prosperity seemed incredibly distant in early 1932. The nation had sunk into the Great Depression, and the federal government was collecting far too little revenue from a Depression-ravaged economy to function. The government, nearly everyone understood, simply had to raise more revenue. But the new revenue the government so desperately needed, top Republicans and Democrats in Washington agreed, must not come from the rich.

In November 1931, Democratic Senate floor leader Joseph Robinson from Arkansas had driven that consensus home with comments the *Washington Post* called “so conservative as to sound like a statement from

Secretary of the Treasury Andrew Mellon,” the mega-millionaire who spent the 1920s orchestrating tax cuts that sheared the top tax rate on America's highest incomes from 77 to 25 percent. Robinson warned the American people against any move that might subject the nation's wealthy to significant new taxation. Serious people all agreed, the Senate's top Democrat would explain, that the government could only tax the rich so high “without discouraging investment and production.”

The Herbert Hoover White House agreed, in part. Administration officials would ask Congress to enact higher federal excise taxes on many everyday purchases, everything from tobacco to telephone calls. But the Republican Hoover administration would not go along with a national sales tax. Undersecretary of the Treasury Ogden Mills, soon to become treasury secretary after Andrew Mellon resigned to become America's ambassador to Great Britain, asked Congress instead to up the nation's top income bracket tax rate from 25 to 40 percent.

What explains this White House willingness to contemplate slightly higher tax levies on America's comfortable? Hoover may have considered a little political discretion here the better part of valor. Better a modest tax increase on the wealthy than risk the unpredictable popular wrath a national sales tax might unleash.

THE 'POLITICS OF DEFERENCE'

Republican and Democratic leaders in Congress had no such fears. The heat they felt came from newspaper publisher William Randolph Hearst, the powerful media magnate who had emerged as the national sales tax notion's most fervent advocate...Americans, Hearst wrote in a nationally circulated March 1932 editorial, must “carry on a sustained crusade Morning, Evening, and Sunday against the present Bolshevik system of income taxation.”

The Democratic Party majority on the House Ways and Means Committee would obediently oblige. Lawmakers on the panel repudiated the Hoover administration and nixed any income tax hike. They passed instead an almost all-encompassing national sales tax, a 2.25 percent manufacturer's excise levy on everything but food.

What happened next would floor top Democrats

and their calculated bid to position the party as a reliable partner for America's rich and powerful. Powerful Democrats — like the Wall Street financier Jacob Raskob — had simply gone too far. Americans would push back. They would mount the first national political surge against plutocracy since the Great Depression began.

The surge broke out almost as a matter of spontaneous political combustion. From across the nation, average Americans began bombarding congressional offices with angry complaints about the pending new national sales tax. In the face of this surprise bombardment, rank-and-file Democrats in Congress would suddenly rediscover their inner displeasure at America's staggering concentration of income and wealth. They would join with Representative Fiorello LaGuardia from New York and other progressive House Republicans to kill the national sales tax by a stunning 223-153 margin.

Amid shouts of “soak the rich!” on the House floor, this unexpected majority would go on to raise the top tax rate from 25 percent on income over \$100,000 to 63 percent on income over \$1 million. The new higher tax rates, notes tax historian Elliot Brownlee, would double the effective tax burden on America's richest 1 percent....

In fact, the soaking had been more a quick rinse. Taxes on the nation's wealthy would remain, even after the increases, substantially lower than top rates in effect during World War I. The bulk of the tax dollars the new revenue legislation would raise would come from new and increased excise taxes, some on luxury items like furs but most on everyday items like chewing gum and lubricating oil.

Even so, the 1932 tax fight did mark a turning point. The rich and their political enablers had reached for the brass ring, a national sales tax.

THE AMERICAN PEOPLE HAD SLAPPED THEM DOWN.

In Albany, the state capital of New York, an ambitious governor took notice. Just two weeks after the tax brouhaha in Washington, Franklin D. Roosevelt, a leading candidate for the 1932 Democratic Party nomination, would begin a remarkable series of addresses that aligned his candidacy four-square with America's grassroots push against plutocracy.

The first of these addresses, broadcast April 7 in NBC's *Lucky Strike Hour*, would champion the “forgotten man at the bottom of the economic pyramid” and blast away at political leaders who “can think in terms only of the top of the social and economic structure.”

The next month, at a commencement address at Georgia's Oglethorpe University, Roosevelt would deliver a stirring call for “bold, persistent experimentation” to aid the “millions who are in want.”

“Do what we may have to do to inject life into our ailing economic order,” the Presidential hopeful would explain, “we cannot make it endure for long unless we can bring about a wiser, more equitable distribution of the national income.”

THE NEW DEAL HAD BEGUN.

Could a defeat of the GOP tax plans of 2017 signal a similar new egalitarian upsurge? Maybe. But first we have to deliver that defeat.

SAM PIZZIGATI CO-EDITS INEQUALITY.ORG AND ALSO CONTRIBUTES REGULARLY TO OURFUTURE.ORG. HIS MOST RECENT BOOK: *THE RICH DON'T ALWAYS WIN: THE FORGOTTEN TRIUMPH OVER PLUTOCRACY THAT CREATED THE AMERICAN MIDDLE CLASS, 1900-1970*.

Source: *Inequality.org* 11/25/17



New gilded age: world's billionaires own \$6 trillion

JAKE JOHNSON

In an analysis published Thursday that throws into stark relief the "unjust and unsustainable" nature of what economists have termed the New Gilded Age, the Swiss financial firm UBS found that the wealth of the world's billionaires grew by 17 percent in 2016, bringing their combined fortune to a record \$6 trillion—more than double the gross domestic product of the United Kingdom.

The report also found that there are 1,542 billionaires in the world and more than 563 in the United States alone, more than any other country.

Josef Stadler, lead author of the UBS analysis, told the *Guardian* that the firm's findings demonstrate that the world is "now two years into the peak of the second Gilded Age."

The extent of the world's wealth concentration—just eight men now own as much wealth as half of the global population—raises a number of questions, one of which is whether the world's population will continue to tolerate such vast inequities, Stadler said.

"We're at an inflection point," Stadler argued. "Wealth concentration is as high as in 1905, this is something billionaires are concerned about. The problem is the power of interest on interest—that makes big money bigger and, the question is to what extent is that sustainable and at what point will society intervene and strike back?"

But despite insistence from leading economists and institutions like the International Monetary Fund that raising taxes on the wealthy is necessary to shrink the growing gap between the billionaires and everyone else, many global powers are doing precisely the opposite.

In France, President Emmanuel Macron made what economist Thomas Piketty called a "historical error" by drastically slashing the country's wealth tax as part of his sweeping pro-business economic agenda.

The Republican-controlled U.S. Congress, meanwhile, is moving rapidly to adopt a tax plan that would deliver massive gains to the already wealthy while slash-

"We're at an inflection point. Wealth concentration is as high as in 1905."

—JOSEF STADLER, UBS

ing safety net programs that low-income and middleclass families depend on for survival.

According to an analysis by the People's Policy Project, the top one percent in the U.S. already owns a "stunning" 77 percent of the wealth. Meanwhile, those in the bottom ten percent are "net debtors." Non-partisan analyses have found that the GOP tax plan would make this gap even larger.

As *Common Dreams* reported earlier this month, even some billionaires agree that inequality is out of control, and that a more progressive tax code is necessary to remedy the problem.

"Three decades of data prove that tax cuts for the wealthy do not 'trickle down' to working people or grow the overall economy," billionaire environmentalist Tom Steyer concluded in a recent op-ed for the *Los Angeles Times*. "Let's raise taxes on the rich.... Let's boost wages to stimulate economic growth and job creation. It's the only way we will create broad prosperity, rebuild the middle class, and give working families a fair shake."

Source: *Common Dreams* 10/27/17
<https://www.commondreams.org/>

Paradise papers expose 'rapid movement toward international oligarchy'

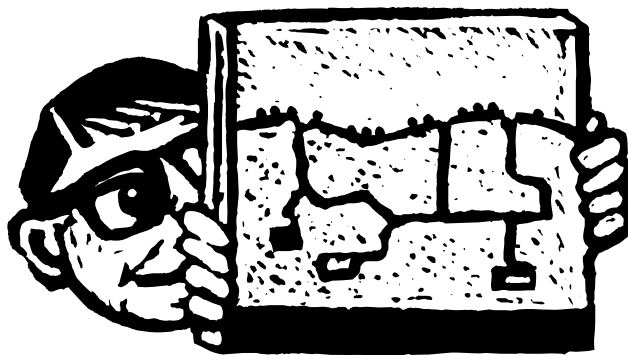
JESSICA CORBETT

Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) on Monday decried a world in which "billionaires and multinational corporations get richer by hiding their wealth and profits and avoid paying their fair share of taxes."

"The major issue of our time is the rapid movement toward international oligarchy," Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) declared in a statement to the *Guardian* on Monday, which noted that "Sanders' intervention in the debate sparked by the Paradise Papers marks the most prominent political response to the leak in their opening 24 hours." Decrying a world "in which a handful of billionaires own and control a significant part of the global economy," Sanders said

the trove of more than 13 million leaked documents detailing offshore dealings "shows how these billionaires and multinational corporations get richer by hiding their wealth and profits and avoid paying their fair share of taxes." Sanders said the documents expose a "major problem not just for the U.S. but for governments throughout the world."

According to the *Guardian*, he also "pointed the finger of blame for the flourishing of offshore holdings on both Congress and the Trump administration. He told the *Guardian* that Republicans in Congress were responsible for providing 'even more tax breaks to profitable corporations like Apple and Nike.' The same tax breaks, he said, were being seized



upon by super-wealthy members of Trump's cabinet 'who avoid billions in U.S. taxes by shifting American jobs and profits to offshore tax havens. We need to close these loopholes and demand a fair and progressive tax system.'"

Sanders took to Twitter on Monday to call on Congress to investigate the Paradise Papers, adding his voice to growing demands for U.S. government ac-

tion as several members of President Donald Trump's inner circle continue to be implicated in the leaked records and subsequent news reports.

Source: *Common Dreams* 11/6/17
<https://www.commondreams.org/>



Mainstream Media = Truth? Check out the Alternatives and Find out for yourself!

If you tap in to some of the alternative media, you will get a very different perspective on events. Especially now, when the mainstream media often acts as a cheerleader for whatever the administration does, it's necessary to go a little further to get your news. An internet connection is helpful.

Firedoglake <http://firedoglake.com>

Emptywheel
<http://emptywheel.firedoglake.com/>

Calitics <http://www.calitics.com/>

Eschaton <http://www.eschatonblog.com/>

Huffington Post
<http://www.huffingtonpost.com>

Hullabaloo <http://digbysblog.blogspot.com>

Daily Kos <http://www.dailykos.com>

Talking Points Memo
<http://www.talkingpointsmemo.com>

TPM Muckraker
<http://www.tpmmuckraker.com/>

FiveThirtyEight.com
<http://www.fivethirtyeight.com/>

Congress Matters
<http://www.congressmatters.com>

Think Progress <http://thinkprogress.com>

Down With Tyranny
<http://downwithtyranny.blogspot.com/>

Crooks and Liars
<http://www.crooksandliars.com>

Media Matters <http://mediamatters.org/>

Common Dreams
<http://www.commondreams.org/>

Truth Out <http://www.truthout.org/>

Raw Story <http://www.rawstory.com>

Open Left <http://www.openleft.com/>

AlterNet <http://www.alternet.org/>

Independent Media Center
<http://www.indymedia.org>

The Nation <http://www.thenation.com/>

Hightower News
<http://www.webactive.com/hightower/>

Mother Jones <http://www.motherjones.com/>

In These Times <http://inthesetimes.com/>

The Guardian
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/worldlatest/>

Corporate Watch
<http://www.corpwatch.org/home/PHH.jsp>

KPFA (94.1 FM) provides excellent coverage on many issues. You can listen on the internet at <http://www.kpfa.org>

Democracy Now! on KPFA, 94.1 FM and KVMR, 89.5 FM or on the web at: <http://www.democracynow.org>

People's World <http://www.peoplesworld.org>



Building a regeneration movement in your community

REGENERATION INTERNATIONAL

The paradigm shift from degenerative food, farming and land-use practices toward regenerative practices—those that *regenerate* soil, biodiversity, health, local economies and climate stability—is arguably the most critical transformation occurring throughout the world today.

Regeneration practices, scaled up globally on billions of acres of farmland, pasture and forest, have the potential to not only mitigate, but also to reverse global warming. At the same time, these practices provide solutions to other burning issues such as poverty, deteriorating public health, environmental degradation and global conflict.

The promise of regeneration lies in its ability to increase plant photosynthesis on a large scale. Plant photosynthesis, which draws down CO₂ from the atmosphere and releases oxygen, transfers carbon into the plant roots and soil. Fundamental changes in farming, grazing and land use practices across billions of acres of land, as well as the shift to 100-percent renewable energy, has the potential to draw down enough CO₂ from the atmosphere into our soils, plants and forests to reverse global warming and re-stabilize the climate.

As this great drawdown and re-carbonization of the soil and biota occurs, civilization will reap a wide range of other benefits. These include increased soil fertility, increased soil moisture (rainfall retention), the return of regular rainfall and weather patterns, increased food production, nutrient-rich food, enhanced biodiversity, rural and urban economic development and millions of new “green” jobs.

The biggest obstacle we face in scaling regenerative agriculture is educating the public on a global scale. Only a small percentage of citizens, farmers, scientists and policymakers understand the benefits of regenerative food and farming. Some haven’t even heard the term. Therefore, our initial task is to educate folks on the message of regeneration. From there, we can organize core groups, coalitions, pilot projects and policy reforms in every town, city, state and nation. The following action plan is designed to jumpstart an educational campaign on regenerative food, farming and land use.

STEP 1. LEARN THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF REGENERATIVE FOOD, FARMING AND LAND-USE.

Learn how to explain regenerative food, farming and land use as a solution to climate change, global food insecurity, biodiversity loss, water scarcity, public health and more. Be sure to avoid the “doom and gloom” climate change talk, and instead focus on the solution: regenera-

tion. Once you understand the principles of regenerative food, farming and land use, get excited! Your inspiration will inspire others to join the cause. Over time, you’ll improve your outreach and your ability to recruit others. A good place to start is to engage in conversations with people you already know, and who are concerned about the crises we recurrently face. Avoid those closed off to the concept of regeneration. Focus instead on people who are open minded and interested in solutions. You’ll know you’re ready to spread the message of regeneration on a larger scale once you’ve inspired those closest to you, i.e. friends, family members, co-workers.

For more information on regeneration, visit <http://regenerationinternational.org>

STEP 2. DEVELOP A CORE GROUP OF 4-5 REGENERATORS. THEN JOIN OR CREATE YOUR LOCAL “REGENERATE” FACEBOOK GROUP

Candidates for these groups include but aren’t limited to local food, climate, farm and political activists; environmentalists; local church members; students; teachers; gardeners; and artists. Plan a potluck or study group to build your core group’s understanding of our most pressing issues and brainstorm ways to grow your mission. Ask your members to join a local “Regenerate” Facebook group. Or create one if there isn’t an existing group in your area.

STEP 3. GET FAMILIAR WITH THE GLOBAL 4/1000 INITIATIVE ON SOILS AND FOOD SECURITY.

The 4/1000 Initiative is the only global local-to-national climate strategy to sequester excess carbon from the atmosphere as a means of reversing climate change. Think of the 4/1000 initiative as sort of a Global Declaration of Interdependence, an acknowledgement and a pledge, from people all over the world, to commit to a plan to regenerate our planet.

Activists in dozens of countries worldwide are now using the 4/1000 Initiative as an outreach tool for recruiting individuals and organizations to join the regeneration movement. Our hope is that these coalitions will lobby representatives at the city, county, state, national and international levels to pass resolutions supportive of the 4/1000 initiative.

Regeneration International’s goal is to get 100,000 community-based organizations and NGOs (non-governmental organizations) to sign on to the 4/1000 Initiative by 2020, ultimately inspiring a global grassroots movement.

STEP 4. DEVELOP A PLAN OF ACTION FOR REACHING THE MASSES.

For the regeneration movement to take root, individuals and groups will need to understand the importance of connecting the dots between what they or their organizations are already working on, and the global campaign to regenerate the Earth’s natural systems, including climate, and soil and water cycles—and ultimately the health of the planet and all who inhabit it.

Target groups include: food, environmental, farm, climate, peace, immigration and faith-based groups, as well as students and others with an open mind and interest in regeneration.

How will you reach out to these groups? How will you identify people within the groups who are receptive to regeneration as an over-arching solution to multiple crises? Suggestions include attending their meetings, listening to their concerns, then finding an opening to introduce the concept of regeneration. Some groups like to have speakers/presentations at their meetings—can you get on the schedule? Or maybe invite a few people from multiple groups to a separate gathering, to discuss their work, and how it fits in with the regeneration movement?

STEP 5. CONTACT REGENERATION INTERNATIONAL TO LEARN HOW TO ARRANGE REGIONAL AND NATIONAL MEETINGS.

Once your core group has educated other groups and individuals in your area, built a critical mass of organizations signed on to the 4/1000 initiative, and begun lobbying local representatives to pass 4/1000 resolutions, contact Regeneration International to learn how to arrange regional and national meetings to spread the message of regeneration even more widely.

Regeneration International can also provide resources for promoting and scaling regenerative plot projects <http://www.regenerationhub.co/en/> and best practices for your region.

RONNIE CUMMINS IS INTERNATIONAL DIRECTOR OF THE ORGANIC CONSUMERS ASSOCIATION AND MEMBER OF THE REGENERATION INTERNATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE.

Source: Organic Consumers Association 10/9/17
<https://www.organicconsumers.org/>

Keep our water clean

We all love our local rivers and lakes; whether you fish, swim, or simply enjoy the views and wildlife. As November begins and the weather forecasts look increasingly wet, it’s a good idea to think about what we can do to prevent contamination of our watersheds via storm water.

As the rain sweeps over our neighborhoods and yards, our watersheds risk residential runoff pollution from chemicals and organic waste material. This time of year, we can all reassess the effects our household activities have on the natural systems around us. Here are a few good habits to keep harmful pollutants out of the waterways:

- Pick up your pet’s waste every time!

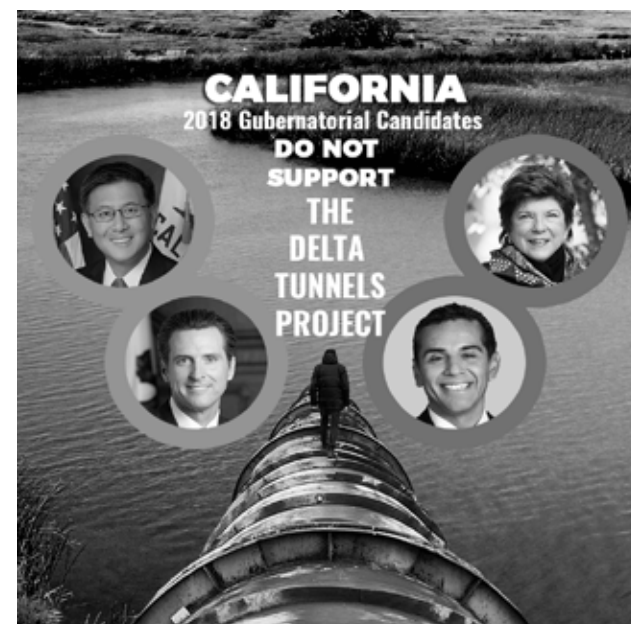
This can help prevent disease-causing pathogens from entering the water system.

- Inspect your car for oil and anti-freeze leaks. Soak any leaked fluid in kitty litter to dispose of it in the trash. Consider repairing long-term leaks.
- Dispose of unwanted paints, solvents, and household cleaners responsibly (instructions for safe disposal are often listed on the container). Do not empty containers outside, where the chemicals may be transported by rainwater into the watershed.
- Don’t fertilize your lawn or apply herbicides near ditches, gutters, or storm drains, especially prior to a

rainstorm.

- Try to avoid overwatering your lawn, as street runoff can carry chemicals from your yard into the waterway.
- Inform members of your community about the hazards of storm water pollution. Report littering and illegal dumping of hazardous materials to your county’s water department.

Source: Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center 11/7/17
<http://www.cslerc.org/>





New study shows urgently needed 100% renewable transition more feasible than ever

JULIA CONLEY

A transition to 100 percent renewable energy by 2050—or even sooner—is not only possible, but would also cost less and create millions of new jobs, according to new research presented in Bonn, Germany on Thursday. The German non-profit Energy Watch Group (EWG) teamed up with Finland's Lappeenranta University of Technology to present a study at the COP23 climate summit.

The results of the study, according to a forward written by EWG's president Hans-Josef Fell, show "that a 100% renewable electricity system is an effective and urgently needed climate protection measure. A

global zero emission power system is feasible and more cost-effective than the existing system based on nuclear and fossil fuel energy."

To achieve the Paris Agreement's goal of limiting the warming of the earth to well below two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, the report argued that "we need a two-fold strategy: to reduce greenhouse

gas emissions down to zero and to remove surplus carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. A key aspect of this strategy should be a transition to an emission-free global economy, based on 100 percent renewable energy."

Moving to this system through the use of solar and wind power, combined with establishing energy storage systems, would bring the total cost of energy from more than 80 dollars to about 60 dollars per MWh. Thirty-six million jobs would also be created by 2050 through the transition, compared with 19 million energy jobs in the current economy, according to the research.

In an interview with *Deutsche Welle* published Thursday, author and 350.org co-founder Bill McKibben agreed with the study's assertion that a complete shift from fossil fuels is necessary to avoid even more dangerous effects of global warming than those the planet is already experiencing.

"If we have any hope of preventing absolute civilization challenge and catastrophe, then we need to be bringing down carbon emissions with incredible rapidity, far faster than it can happen just via normal economic transition," McKibben said.

While entirely possible from an economic standpoint as the new research shows, the political feasibility of the transition is another story. "That depends entirely on whether we can build movements large enough to break the power of the fossil fuel industry that holds us where we are," said McKibben. "To go further what we

need are many people in the streets demanding action and pushing governments to move much, much faster than they're currently contemplating."

Source: Common Dreams 11/9/17
<https://www.commondreams.org/>

"If we have any hope of preventing absolute civilization challenge and catastrophe, then we need to be bringing down carbon emissions with incredible rapidity, far faster than it can happen just via normal economic transition."

—BILL MCKIBBEN

'America last': US vs. entire world after Syria agrees to join Paris accord

JESSICA CORBETT

At the COP23 United Nations climate summit in Bonn, Germany on Tuesday, war-torn Syria announced that it would sign on to the Paris agreement, leaving the United States—after President Donald withdrew his support earlier this year—as the only nation on planet Earth to oppose the international accord opponent.

"As if it wasn't already crystal clear, every single other country in the world is moving forward together to tackle the climate crisis, while Donald Trump has isolated the United States on the world stage in an embarrassing and dangerous position," said Sierra Club president Michael Brune, following the announcement. "Trump's desperate moves to help corporate polluters by refusing to acknowledge the reality of the climate crisis shows that he neither cares about leadership nor does he understand it."

The delegate who made the announcement for the Middle Eastern country, which is still consumed by a six-year civil war, did not offer an explanation for the policy shift, according to the *New York Times*. Various environmental groups and activists celebrated the news, but also emphasized the importance of maintaining pressure on Trump and his administration, with the World Resource Institute (WRI) labeling the U.S. a #climateloner on Twitter.

In late 2015, nearly 200 nations—including the United States, under former President Barack Obama—agreed to the carbon-cutting Paris accord. In June 2017, Trump revealed he planned to withdraw from it (although the U.S. cannot formally ditch the deal until 2020). Just last month, Nicaragua announced it would sign on to

the agreement, leaving only Syria and the United States opposed. Syria's announcement on Tuesday means the U.S.—currently the second-biggest contributor to global greenhouse gas emissions—is the only holdout.

"Syria's announcement that it will join the Paris agreement leaves President Trump in not-so-splendid isolation as a result of his irresponsible and ignorant decision to withdraw the United States from the most comprehensive effort ever to confront the mounting climate crisis," said Alden Meyer, director of strategy and policy at the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) and an expert on the UN's international climate negotiations process. Meyer is currently at COP23.

"With Syria's decision, the relentless commitment of the global community to deliver on Paris is more evident than ever," Paula Caballero, WRI's director of the climate change program, told the *Times*. "The U.S.'s stark isolation should give Trump reason to reconsider his ill-advised announcement and join the rest of the world in tackling climate change."

"It's almost impossible to pick the most embarrassing action by President Trump since he took office: There are simply too many choose from," said Environmental Working Group president Ken Cook. "But his

decision to pull the U.S. out of the climate pact is certainly near the top. A year ago, the country was leading the effort to combat climate change, but now with Trump in charge, we're the only nation on the planet fleeing from the fight."

Source: Common Dreams 11/7/17
<https://www.commondreams.org/>



Trump v. Earth

Our air is too clean?

BRIAN PALMER

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt has been restocking the agency's scientific advisory committees this week, mostly with industry insiders. And one of the few academics that Pruitt has selected, Robert Phalen of the University of California, Irvine, has an unorthodox view of air pollution.

"Modern air is a little too clean for optimum health," Phalen told the American Association for the Advancement of Science in a 2012 profile that is now gaining attention. In a recent follow-up, Phalen noted that children raised on farms and with pets tend to have lower asthma rates. This theory, known as the hygiene hypothesis, posits that the antiseptic of modern life is responsible for an increase in asthma and allergies.

Phalen's statement is troubling. The hygiene hypothesis has nothing to do with "clean air," at least as the EPA typically thinks of clean air (i.e., not polluted). German immunologist Erika von Mutius, the originator of the hygiene hypothesis, based her theory on the observation that people who were ex-

posed to dirt and manure in early life were less likely to suffer from allergies. Since then, adherents of the hypothesis have focused on microbiome research, which examines the microbial communities that colonize the human body. The field revolves around the population of microbes in our bodies and in our homes.

I am aware of no evidence that suggests exposure to soot, ground-level ozone, or other environmental pollutants—the kind of pollutants on which the EPA generally focuses—reduces the incidence of asthma or allergies. To the contrary, there is ample evidence that particulate matter, nitrogen oxides, and ozone increase the burden of those disorders.

In short, our children's hands might be too clean, but our air is definitely not.

Stay up-to-date on Trump's environmental antics by visiting NRDC's Trump Watch: <https://www.nrdc.org/trump-watch>

Source: On Earth 11/9/17
<https://www.nrdc.org/>



Hope for Palestine requires action

GLORIA FEARN

Ata Manasra - a high school English teacher turned tour guide and coordinator of the Narjes Community Development Project in the village of Wadi Foquin, West Bank - visited Stockton recently. In 2014 my husband Dean and I, with a dozen Friends of Wadi Foquin, enjoyed a tour that Ata led through Israel and the West Bank. We visited Wadi Foquin and other villages in the Bethlehem area. Ata told us that since we visited, settlement construction on Palestinian land has accelerated throughout the West bank, and that people in Wadi Foquin are really hurting.



ATA MANASRA, COORDINATOR OF NARJES COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Wadi Foquin, enjoys a unique Muslim/Christian partnership with the United Methodist Church. This partnership began in 2009 in the Bay Area and was adopted by the UMC General Board of Global Missions. Village leaders have chosen to nonviolently resist the Israeli Occupation by remaining in their homes and investing in projects that engender hope, pride, and practical life skills for village youth. The Village Council prioritizes and builds projects. United Methodists and other Friends of Wadi Foquin raise funds, provide resources and lobby congress to protect the village. See: friendsofwadifoquin.com

Wadi Foquin is a microcosm of all the challenges facing Palestinians under Israel's 50- year-long occupation of their land. Over 50,000 recently-arrived settlers, many from the USA, look down on the fields and homes of villagers from their hilltop perch in the illegal settlement of Beitar Illit. The settlement sits on village land. Settlement sewerage and construction sludge run downhill destroying natural springs and Palestinian farmland. Ata's pictures of gun carrying settlers swimming in one of the village's agricultural cisterns were chilling. Settlers often

invade the village destroying trees, playgrounds and irrigation equipment. Israeli military checkpoints limit access to jobs, schools, hospitals, farm lands, places of worship and markets. Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) target and arrest children during random nighttime raids.

On August 3rd, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited Beitar Illit. During his visit, the IDF piled dirt mounds across the road blocking off access to the village for several hours. Netanyahu was there to break ground for 1,100 new settlement units covering a third hilltop belonging to the village. He also announced plans for a new road connecting Beitar Illit to Jerusalem. When this construction is completed Wadi Foquin will be completely surrounded by settlements. Village leaders fear the settlement expansion will lead to the permanent closure of the access road making it impossible to sustain life in the village.

Friends of Wadi Foquin wear "Save the Wadi" T shirts. It's a daunting task. But in 2011 an IDF soldier predicted that the villagers would be gone within the year. It hasn't happened. Since then, several of the partnership's projects have been completed.

PROJECTS CONTINUE

The beehive project produces a high value commodity that won't spoil at a closed check point. An abandoned building is now a community center where women gather to make their crafts and sell to tourists. Young people go there to learn survival skills for life under occupation. The new soccer field with turf and solar lights is now home to Wadi Foquin's much celebrated soccer team.

Ata came to Stockton to raise money to build small guest cabins on village land. The plan is to encourage tourism. The presence of internationals is helpful all year around, but especially during the olive harvest. When international visitors come they not only buy crafts and enjoy unsurpassed hospitality, they help with the harvest and go home to tell the story. The IDF and settlers are less aggressive in the presence of internationals. Returning to Wadi Foquin to pick olives is high on my bucket list.

I suspect that I'm no different than many others who have met the living stones on the other side of the wall. For me, the Holy Land is no longer about artifacts and ruins. It's about people. Their stories deconstruct the propaganda that dominates the press coverage of Palestine and Palestinians. I tell all of my friends to go, see, listen and feel. People of faith have been doing that for years.

Most mainline churches have enacted policies supporting justice for all people in Palestine. The faithful support Projects in Wadi Foquin and other villages. They establish non-profits like Interfaith Peace Builders, Sabeel, US Campaign for Palestinian Rights and Jewish Voice for Peace that lead tours and lobby to change US policy. I'm a United Methodist. Our 2012 (world-wide) General

Conference is on record. The United Methodist Church calls for Israel to end the occupation, land confiscations, and the expansion of settlements. The 2016 GC passed a resolution specifically supporting Wadi Foquin.

The conversation has moved from the churches into the halls of congress. Friends of Wadi Foquin have so far done two well attended Congressional briefings on Capitol Hill. There will be another on November 14th, before this article is published. There will be more briefings. We need to be informed and stay in conversation with our Congress Members and Senators. Let them know that we expect them to attend these briefings, and support enlightened, even-handed policies that bring justice to everyone. Calls and letters from you and your friends will not be ignored. They grow hope for Palestine.

It's time for light - in Gaza

Today in Gaza 750,000 children live in darkness because electricity is out 21 hours per day. For children in Gaza nights are long and frightening.

Through its Time For Light campaign, the Rebuilding Alliance (with the assistance of its four Palestinian non-governmental organization partners) has so far shipped 28,000 Nur Al Amal Solar-powered lanterns to Gaza. The U.S. State Department, Senator Feinstein's office and Representative Eshoo's office are all standing by to help. These lanterns make a difference in the lives of Palestinian children and their families.

Rebuilding Alliance is a 501(c)3 non-profit charitable organization working for a just and enduring peace in Israel and Palestine founded upon equal rights, security, and opportunity for all.

Visit the Peace and Justice Network Table at the Peaceful Holiday Faire. Members of the Israel/Palestine Task Force, California/Nevada United Methodist Church will be there with Nur Al Amal Solar-powered lanterns for Gaza. \$40 gets two lights for Gaza and one to shine a holiday light for Gaza's children in your own window.

13 terrible things about the Senate Republican tax plan

payers making \$50-75,000 take this deduction for state and local income and property taxes, as do half of those making \$75-100,000. Eliminating SALT will put pressure on state and local budgets, likely forcing cuts to education, health care, and infrastructure. [Government Finance Officers Assoc. and CBPP]

11. Helps Donald Trump pay much less in taxes. The plan repeals the alternative minimum tax (AMT), losing \$770 billion. Without the AMT, Trump would have paid just a 4% tax rate on \$153 million in income one year. But thanks to the AMT, he paid \$38 million for a tax rate of 25%. The Trump family also benefits handsomely from the passthrough loophole and the estate tax cuts. [JCT and New York Times]

12. Lets many wealthy heirs avoid paying the estate tax. The estate tax is substantially weakened, losing \$83

billion and allowing more rich families to inherit wealth tax-free. The tax now only applies to estates worth over \$5.5 million per person or \$11 million per couple—about 5,500 estates. Under the bill, only estates worth at least \$11 million per person or \$22 million per couple (about 1,800 estates) would pay the tax. [JCT, TPC, CBPP]

13. Breaks Trump's promise to close the "carried interest" loophole benefitting Wall Street.

Remember when candidate Trump promised to get rid of this loophole that primarily benefits private equity fund managers? The Senate plan keeps it in place. [New York Times]

Source: Americans for Tax Fairness report 11/22/17
<https://americansfortaxfairness.org>

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

It's Time For Light!
Brighten the Future of Gaza's Families

Nur al-Amal
Donate \$40

One for you,
Two for children
in Gaza





Trump's secret weapon for 2020 keeps quietly gathering steam

SARAH WASKO

If you live in a mid-sized city in a battleground state, you are more likely than ever to see pro-Trump propaganda on your local news by next election season -- thanks to conservative media giant Sinclair Broadcast Group, the Federal Communications Commission, and the Trump administration itself.

Last week, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) quietly voted along party lines to eliminate its "main studio rule," which mandated that local news stations maintain offices within the communities they serve. Without the main studio rule, Sinclair is free to consolidate and centralize local news resources in its roughly 190 stations across the country, eliminating the "local" element of local news as much as possible.

This move is just the latest in a thriving symbiotic relationship between the openly conservative Sinclair and the Trump FCC, a relationship that seems to benefit all parties but the American public. And there's more to come.

Sinclair is known for its history of injecting right-wing spin into local newscasts, most notably with its nationally produced "must-run" commentary segments. The segments, which all Sinclair-owned and operated news stations are required to air, include (frequently embarrassing) pro-Trump propaganda missives from former Trump aide Boris Epshteyn, rants about "politically correct" culture from former Sinclair exec Mark Hyman, and fearmongering "Terrorism Alert Desk" segments that seem to largely focus on just about anything Muslims do.

Just yesterday, for example, as news broke of the federal indictments of former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort and campaign staffer Rick Gates and the guilty plea of George Papadopoulos for lying to the FBI during its investigation into Russian meddling -- making it perhaps the worst day in Trump's presidency so far -- Sinclair was airing a "Bottom Line With Boris" segment in which Epshteyn asserted that impending Republican tax reform was contributing to a soaring stock market benefiting all Americans.

As it stands, Sinclair is broadcasting segments like these on stations across 34 states and the District of Columbia, particularly in local media markets for suburbs and mid-sized cities from Maine to California. The news behemoth is now awaiting FCC approval of its acquisition of Tribune Media, which would allow Sinclair to further spread its propaganda in the country's top media markets, reaching nearly three-quarters of U.S. households. If last week's actions are any indication of the five FCC commissioners' adherence to party lines, the FCC seal of approval for this deal is pretty much a sure thing thanks to its current Republican majority.

Even before Trump won the election, Sinclair had aligned itself with him by reportedly striking a deal for greater press access to the then-candidate in exchange for better coverage. And since Trump took office and appointed a conservative FCC chairman, Ajit Pai, the agency has taken significant action to loosen its rules in ways that just so happen to allow Sinclair to further solidify its power.

In April, the commission voted to reinstate an outdated rule known as "the UHF discount," which first cleared the way for Sinclair to purchase Tribune Media. The FCC prohibits major broadcasters like Sinclair from owning TV stations "that collectively reach more than 39 percent" of U.S. households -- but the UHF discount allowed entities to skirt this regulation by giving certain stations less weight when calculating this cap, based on outdated technology considerations. The discount was eliminated in 2016, but the FCC under Trump quickly moved to reinstate the outdated rule, making Sinclair's anticipated expansion possible.

The FCC is now also making moves to relax its exist-

ing local media ownership caps, a proposal that would allow Sinclair to own more than one of the top four television news stations in certain local media markets. Currently, Sinclair uses existing loopholes to effectively control the operations of more than one top station by entering into news share agreements with other owners. In Sioux City, IA, for example, Sinclair owns the Fox affiliate, KPTH, and operates the CBS affiliate, KMEG, through a "joint services agreement" with KMEG's owner. The



stations are branded together as "Siouxland News" and now share a website, headquarters, and news staff. The new FCC proposal, which will be voted on in November, would eliminate all the extra hassle involved in structuring sharing agreements like this one, letting Sinclair cut right to the chase and own multiple top local stations outright. This would especially help Sinclair as it finalizes its purchase of Tribune Media, leaving the broadcasting giant free to acquire new stations in its existing markets without having to worry about selling off any station properties to comply with FCC rules.

The same proposal would also relax FCC regulations that cap media market ownership across television and radio platforms. Sinclair's 2015 acquisition of its own digital media and mobile news platform, Circa

-- a serial news misinformant in its own right -- and recent rumors that it's exploring a partnership with serial sexual predator Bill O'Reilly hint that the broadcasting company is looking for new ways to deliver conservative news. These FCC changes would certainly permit Sinclair to experiment with consolidating resources at local news stations and redirecting those resources into newer, covert avenues to add right-wing spin to newscasts.

We know that voters continue to trust local news more than national sources. Sinclair and the Trump FCC are working in tandem to exploit that trust with greater precision and power than ever before -- just in time for the 2018 and 2020 elections.

Source: Media Matters 11/1/17
<https://www.mediamatters.org>

'Time to raise hell': internet defenders mobilize as FCC aims to kill net neutrality now

JAKE JOHNSON

Defenders of the open internet are issuing urgent calls to action as news reports indicate that Federal Communications Commission (FCC) chair Ajit Pai has set his sights on a December 14 vote to kill net neutrality and "destroy the internet as we know it." In less than a month, and in defiance of the tens of millions of Americans who have spoken out for the free and open internet, Ajit Pai will move to kill net neutrality. Craig Aaron, president of Free Press, said in a statement. "It's time to raise hell."

The FCC's planned vote will come on the heels of a lengthy, record-breaking comment period during which millions of submissions were filed. One analysis estimated that 95 percent of organic comments came down on the side of net neutrality. While the details and scope of Pai's attack on net neutrality--just one component of his far-reaching deregulatory agenda--will not be fully unveiled until next week, the agency is at the very least expected to rescind the classification of the internet as a public utility under Title II of the Communications Act, which gives the FCC the power to bar internet service providers (ISPs) from blocking or throttling online content.

"Pai's intent is clear: to destroy the internet as we know it and give even more gatekeeper power to a few huge companies like AT&T, Comcast, and Verizon," Aaron concluded. "Any honest look at the facts proves that the Title II rules are working well, investment is up across the board, and the only uncertainty or confusion is based on what's coming out of Pai's mouth. If the FCC passes Pai's plan in December, it will face enormous challenges in court--and in the streets as well." In addition to the overwhelming support for net neutrality shown in comments submitted to the FCC, polls have consistently shown strong bipartisan support for net neutrality among the American public. As /Common Dreams/ reported, a survey published in September found that 57 percent of Americans "support the current net neutrality regulations that ban ISPs from blocking or discriminating against lawful content on the internet." Only 16 percent, by contrast, expressed support for Pai's push to destroy net neutrality.

ACTION: CONTACT YOUR ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES TO ENACT NET NEUTRALITY INTO LAW.

Source: Common Dreams 11/16/17
<https://www.commondreams.org/>



Millions on brink of death in Yemen, but members of Congress can't be bothered with questions

JESSICA CORBETT

Despite warnings about the intensifying humanitarian crisis in war-ravaged Yemen, members of the U.S. Congress dodged questions from an */Intercept/* reporter this week about why lawmakers haven't voted on U.S. support for the Saudi-led military coalition that is bombing the impoverished country while also imposing a blockade of urgently needed aid.

Lee Fang, a journalist with *The Intercept*, partnered with */NowThis/* to produce a video that shows him attempting to question members of Congress on Capitol Hill as part of a report published earlier this week about U.S. support for the war in Yemen and the 2001 Authorization of Use of Military Force (AUMF) that passed Congress after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and which U.S. President Donald Trump and his predecessors have used to justify military actions around the globe without explicit permission from lawmakers.

As Fang notes in his related article, while the coalition battles Houthi rebels, "Saudi Arabia relies heavily on the U.S. military for intelligence sharing, refueling flights for coalition warplanes, and the transfer of American-made cluster bombs, rockets, and other munitions used against targets in Yemen"—which continues in spite of the fact that "coalition warplanes have repeatedly struck crowded markets, hospitals, power plants, and other civil-

ian targets."

Fang writes: "Congress, however, has never authorized U.S. support for the war, which has caused 10,000 civilian deaths and has spiraled in recent months into one of the worst humanitarian crises of the century.... For 16 years, the executive branch has pointed to the AUMF as legal justification for its involvement in conflicts across the Middle East and Africa, a strategy that is legally questionable. But the use of the AUMF in the Yemeni context is especially bizarre given that the AUMF's target is Al Qaeda, and the group AQAP—Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula—is fighting alongside the U.S.-Saudi coalition against the Houthi rebels."

Although several members of Congress brushed off Fang's questions, some expressed frustration with the AUMF, and pointed to a recent bipartisan legislative effort to terminate U.S. involvement, which was quashed by lawmakers who support the Saudi-led coalition.

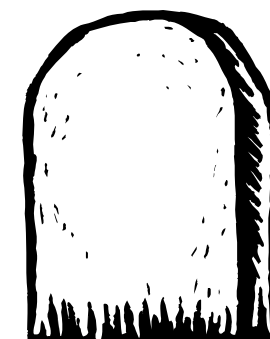
Meanwhile, about 20 humanitarian agencies and the U.N. are warning of a "nightmare scenario," as */Common Dreams/* reported Wednesday, after the Saudi-led coalition closed all air, land, and sea ports to the country, cutting off millions of civilians from life-saving aid.

"There are over 20 million people in need of humanitarian assistance; seven million of them, are facing famine-like conditions and rely completely on food aid to survive," according to the agencies.

"It will not be like the famine that we saw in South Sudan earlier in the year, where tens of thousands of people were affected. It will not be like the famine which cost 250,000 people their lives in Somalia in 2011," warned Mark Lowcock, U.N. undersecretary-general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator, speaking to reporters at the United Nations headquarters in New York. "It will be the largest famine the world has seen for many decades, with millions of victims."

Lowcock, who visited Yemen last month, noted that "humanitarian access through the ports was inadequate even before" the blockade was announced, and said the U.N.'s World Food Programme feeds about seven million Yemenis per month. In addition to the millions who are starving, Yemen is also facing a cholera epidemic that has killed hundreds of thousands of people.

Source: *Common Dreams* 11/10/17
<https://www.commondreams.org/>



Americans own 42 percent of the world's guns

MARK KARLIN

In a November 7 article in *The New York Times* by Max Fisher and Josh Keller, the two reporters reflect upon the somber phenomenon of mass shootings in the United States. Faced with an unrelenting occurrence of such incidents, they attempt to ascertain the enabling circumstances for such atrocities. They conclude that the only variable that can explain the high rate of mass shootings in America is its astronomical number of guns. The top-line numbers suggest a correlation that, on further investigation, grows only clearer.

One must be wary of assessments that attribute a complex problem to only one factor, as this one does. However, the United States has 4.4 percent of the world population but 42 percent of the world's guns. And, from 1966 to 2012, 31 percent of the gunmen in mass shootings worldwide were American, according to a 2015 study by Adam Lankford, a professor at the University of Alabama. Consider this reality alongside the fact that, among nations with more than 10 million people, only Yemen exceeds the US in mass killings, according to the Lankford study. Yemen has the second highest gun ownership rate, after the US. These facts indicate a correlation between the rate of a nation's gun ownership and the prevalence of mass shootings.

Of course, when we talk about the roots of mass violence, it's important to consider the influence of historical state violence committed in the name of the United States. In fact, we are a society built upon the

twin-sanctioned acts of Indigenous

genocide and chattel slavery. Yes, the US may have a massive arsenal of guns in private hands, but that arsenal is built within a context of a nation founded on violence. The use of violence to physically shape the United States and to form the basis for the agricultural engine of its economy – along with a militarized foreign policy that resorts to violence again and again – certainly has played a role in laying the groundwork for today's acts of mass violence.

Yes, on state holidays and in political speeches we hear lofty words of peace, but the foundation of the nation is a violent one. The lone violent cowboy who killed Native Indigenous people for land is glorified. Christopher Columbus, who nearly wiped out the native Indigenous population of Cuba – the Tainos – is celebrated with a federal holiday created in 1937. Guns are, of course, a major tool for the (mostly white) individuals who, against the backdrop of state-cultural violence, seek to carry out "lone wolf" attacks.

SOLUTIONS?

The US's mass shooting epidemic obviously has led a plethora of writers to contemplate how to reduce the problem, at least in terms of shrinking the personal gun arsenal. A November 17 *Guardian* article

takes another crack at analyzing the power of the National Rifle Association (NRA) over Congress. As is common in such reporting, it details the NRA's lobbying expenditures in the last election: "The NRA bet big on 2016's presidential election, making independent expenditures worth \$53.4m. And the cash seemed to

have been well spent. The NRA poured \$14.4m into supporting 44 candidates who won and \$34.4m opposing 19 candidates who lost, according to CRP. Its only big loss was in Nevada, for the seat vacated by the Democratic minority leader, Harry Reid."

However, according to Dominic Rushe, the author of the *Guardian* report, these large amounts of money are not what allows the NRA to keep Congress under its thumb. He attributes much of the organization's strength to its ability to turn out voters in primaries: "With the NRA pouring money into political races at record levels it is an easy argument to make that the gun lobby has bought Washington – but that fails to paint a full picture...."

By choosing its battles wisely, the NRA has shown an ability to swing primary elections in favor of pro-gun candidates, Winkler said. "That's the real source of their strength," he said. That and its use of a relatively small number of highly motivated people to push an agenda that appears out of step with the general population, which, according to recent polling, is in favor of stricter gun laws. In primary elections, when sometimes only 20 percent or less of the electorate votes, the gun lobby can, in some districts and Senate races, follow the NRA's recommendations and push out candidates who have voted for gun reduction measures, installing politicians who have sworn fealty to the NRA. Most representatives and senators on Capitol Hill are aware of this, particularly in districts with relatively low primary election turnout. In short, a vocal minority of voters, made up of avid gun owners, are skewing gun laws. This includes minimal

oversight of the chain of distribution from manufacturer, to wholesaler to gun shop, to buyer – not to mention the gun show and secondary individual sales market. Given these realities, the fact that we top the world in mass shootings is not surprising – in fact, we may be surprised there are not even more mass shootings.

Source: *Truthout* 11/17/17 <http://www.truth-out.org/buzzflash/>





Green your coffee habit

JILLIAN MACKENZIE

Although the brew that 62 percent of Americans crave, savor, and downright rely on to perk up each morning has some amazing health upsides, it also comes with some complex environmental impacts. Unless you buy, make, and schlep your cup of joe with care, you could be hurting the planet. Here's how to be a more mindful coffee consumer.

BUY "GREEN" BEANS

Earth-friendly labels abound in the coffee aisle, but what do they all mean? Here's a quick primer:

- Fair trade coffee guarantees a minimum price for farmers, fair working conditions, and environmentally sound practices.
- Organic means the coffee was grown without synthetic fertilizers but with methods that improve soil and water quality and conserve wetlands, woodlands, and wildlife.
- Rainforest Alliance certification recognizes good waste management and soil conservation as well as fair wages.
- "Shade grown" is not an official certification, but the designation signifies that the beans were grown under a canopy of other vegetation, which is good for the land and the local wildlife. (Bird lovers should look for the official Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center's Bird Friendly certification, which verifies the coffee is shade-grown as well as organic.)

SHADE-GROWN COFFEE BUSHES

However, simply looking for a label isn't enough, says Teresa von Fuchs, director of sales and marketing for Genuine Origin Coffee Project, a coffee importer and exporter. "Coffee is not grown in a uniform way in different countries or even within the same country," she says. "For instance, in Brazil, farmers' land tends to be too big to qualify for Fair Trade certification." Consumer Reports' Eco-labels Center also cautions

shoppers not to rely too heavily on these claims and seals. Rather, as Fuchs says, do your own research on your coffee purveyor of choice—and "make sure they prioritize the people and the environment."

BREW ONLY WHAT YOU'LL DRINK

Once you've carefully chosen your beans, don't waste them. If you're drinking alone, consider an individual-cup French press, which saves not only coffee but also the electricity used by plug-in drip machines. If

you've brewed more than you'll drink, you could keep it in the fridge as future iced coffee or freeze it into coffee ice cubes. "If you pour coffee down the drain, you're wasting not only that coffee but the energy and materials used to grow and transport it," notes Darby Hoover, senior resource specialist for NRDC's Food & Agriculture program.

You can also reuse, instead of toss, those spent coffee grounds. Gardeners may find them useful in nourishing their acid-loving plants and keeping certain pests away. In the kitchen, a handful of grounds sprinkled on a sponge makes for a handy degreasing tool.



AVOID SINGLE-CUP COFFEE CAPSULES

Although disposable coffee pods keep you from making too much coffee, the capsules themselves are hard to recycle and are piling up at alarming rates in our landfills. To help address this, Keurig recently started making its single-serve pods from polypropylene. Polypropylene is recycled in many communities, though not all, says Hoover. Still, you'll need to first remove the pod's paper lid and any plastic or aluminum that's adhered to the lid, then dump out (or better yet, compost) the coffee grounds inside each pod before putting the plastic in your recycling bin. Capsules from other companies are similarly challenging. "Nespresso makes a capsule that is primarily aluminum," says Hoover. "Aluminum is highly recyclable, but the pods are full of coffee grounds, which may limit their recyclability." The size of coffee pods is also an issue at some recycling plants. "Even if the material is recyclable," Hoover notes, "those small capsules may literally fall through the cracks." So it's important to check with your community to see if the pods are accepted in recycling programs where you live before tossing them into your bin. If you already own a single-serve brewing machine, you may be able to buy a reusable filter pod that you can fill with ground coffee and use in place of all those disposable containers.

CAFFEINATING ON THE GO? MIND THE CUP

The delicious convenience of buying take-out coffee comes with a price: the waste associated with those cups. Paper cups and plates together accounted for close to 1.4 million tons of waste in the United States in 2014, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's most recent statistics; Starbucks alone pegs its volume of

paper cup use at around four billion per year. And those coffee cups are still nonrecyclable in most communities. "We think of them as being lined with wax, but most of them are actually lined with plastic," says Hoover. That plastic can contaminate paper fibers during recycling, as can coffee residue. Still, progress is being made. Hoover explains, "More communities are starting to accept paper cups in recycling or compost bins, and more recycling facilities are developing ways to handle these materials." The other common coffee vessel, the foam cup, also presents environmental issues. "Polystyrene foam is not recycled in most communities, and many cities have banned it for food service," Hoover says.

You can skirt this entire issue by carrying a reusable cup. (At some coffee retailers, you'll even be rewarded with a discount when you bring your own.) Even if you factor in the materials and resources required to make and maintain a reusable cup, it's still easier on the planet than daily disposable cups.

FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE

Coffee is a finicky crop. It grows only in the "bean belt," a range of certain latitudes circling the globe; the belt includes java producers like Brazil, Vietnam, Ethiopia, and Guatemala. The most common variety of bean, high-quality arabica, thrives below 73 degrees Fahrenheit. In that mild climate, beans ripen more slowly than they do in hotter places, and this delivers a richer, more complex brew. "Some studies say that the amount of land in areas suitable for growing the beans could be reduced by 50 percent by 2050," says Carolina Herrera, Latin America advocate for NRDC. Warmer, wetter weather also increases the likelihood of coffee rust, a crop-destroying fungus that exploded in Latin and Central America between 2012 and 2014. "As the world gets warmer, not only will coffee crops be lost, but high-quality coffee will also be more difficult to produce," Herrera says.

Climate change will also be devastating to the people who grow coffee beans. "Around the world, there are 25 million coffee farmers, and the industry supports 125 million people, including the farmers, their families, and their communities," Herrera says. "Many of them work small-scale farms of less than 50 acres. Once there's a loss in productivity, there's a huge impact on communities that are already marginalized economically."

So if you needed yet another reason to urge your local, state, and federal governments to cut carbon pollution, there you have it: Do it for coffee.



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Upcoming Sierra Club meetings

Mon, Jan 22 at 7 pm: A Cornish Miner from Bodie visits our Gathering

Stocktonian Jim Murch will entertain and inform us with his reenactment of the life of Bodie miner William Hick, a Cornishman. Jim collected authentic prop items such as a sledge, rock drill, Cornish three-part lunch bucket, tommy stick and a miner's or engineer's hammer. We will hear of Mr. Hick's travels from mine to mine, the good times and the tough times, and a miner's daily routine. We will conclude with the long term effects of the mining done 120 years ago that we are still feeling today.

Sat, Feb 3, time TBA: Moving forward with action on Climate Change

What's the pathway to take? Diz Swift of League of Women Voters will discuss the need to change and the LWV policy. Hal Ferber of Citizens' Climate Lobby will discuss Carbon Fee and Dividend. Still pending a speaker on Cap and Trade.

Delta-Sierra Club and the League of Women Voters San Joaquin are co-hosting this forum discussing approaches to reducing carbon.

Mon, Feb 27, at 7pm: John Muir and the Big Trees

Naturalist John Muir may have come to California in 1868 to see the Giant Sequoia - the most massive trees in the world. At first he reveled among the groves, then he studied them scientifically, and lastly he fought to preserve "the noblest of the noble race." He visited the Calaveras Grove three times before it was state park and used those visits to promote his ideas. Mike Wurtz, Head of Special Collections and curator of the John Muir collections at the University of the Pacific, will present John Muir and the Big Trees.

All free and open to the public, in the Fireside Room, Central United Methodist Church, 3700 Pacific Ave, Stockton

Lighted Boat Parade Saturday, Dec 2 5 to 7:30 p.m.



Upgrading KXVS The Voice of Stockton

The folks at KXVS The Voice of Stockton have been very busy making preparations to begin broadcasting on the FM dial. You may not have noticed because they have also managed to keep up their daily live stream broadcasts with great shows by and about the community and its members.

Meanwhile, behind the scenes, they've been getting ready to go "on the air", building and planning and making the necessary adjustments, in programming, and also in personnel, because the truth is, that day is fast approaching.

This Fall 2017, Stockton, California will finally have an FM radio station dedicated to serve the community of Stockton, with the help and participation of members of the community. That is nothing short of amazing, and very much needed. If you agree, there are a number of ways you can join the effort and support the cause.

If you want to get involved, or if you want to make a donation, go to KXVS.org/join and let them know what you can do, or call 209-467-4455, or email Volunteer@TheVoiceofStockton.org.

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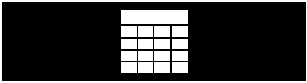
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DECEMBER 2017/JANUARY 2018 CALENDAR

Editor's note: if your event isn't listed, let us know. Send all copy to: bgiudici@caltel.com by the 10th of every month.

NOV 9 - DEC 7

Delta Center for the Arts LH Horton Jr Gallery presents *We All We Got* art exhibition exploring the consequences and devastation of youth violence in contemporary America from 2006-2013 through a mix of powerful photographs, incisive essays and moving letters from diverse individuals affected by this perennial scourge.. SJDC, 5151 Pacific Ave, Stockton. T 11am-4pm, W-Th 11am-6:30pm, F 11am-1pm. Free and open to the public. 209-954-5507.

THURS-SUN NOV 15 - DEC 10

Mamma Mia! Opening Wed 7:30, Thur-Sat 7:30 pm, Sun 2:30 pm. Stockton Civic Theatre, 2312 Rosemarie Lane, Stockton. Based on the music of ABBA, the play tells the story of a young girl who is looking for her birth father to come to her wedding on a Greek Island. Filled with high-spirited music and energetic dancing, Mamma Mia is sure to make audiences young and old stand-up and cheer.. \$15 - \$27. 473-2424. www.sctlivetheatre.com

MON, NOV 27

Delta Sierra Club meeting: Learning to fight climate change, 7 pm. Fireside Room, Central United Methodist Church Fireside Room, 3700 Pacific Ave, Stockton. Free. All welcome. 209-670-4442. (p 18)

THURS-SUN NOV 30 - DEC 3

Delta Drama presents "The Visit" directed by Greg Foro. 7 pm, Sat-Sun 2 pm. A wealthy woman returns to her debt-ridden hometown and offers a sum greater than they have ever imagined in order to help out... on one simple condition. Will the people compromise their morals in order to save their town? Will they stand up by their principles and fight for what is right in the face of abject poverty? What will they collectively decide to do? Durrenmatt's expressionistic tale about human nature and the pitfalls of democracy is as relevant today as when it was written. Everybody has a price. What's yours? Tillie Lewis Theatre, SJDC, 5151 Pacific Ave, Stockton. Adults \$9, seniors \$4.

THURS, NOV 30

Take Five Jazz at the Brew with the Joe Mazzaferro Group CD release party. 7 pm. Valley Brewing Company 157 W Adams Street Stockton. \$10 general, \$5 student w/ ID.

FRI, DEC 1

31st annual Peaceful Holiday Gift Fair, featuring peace gifts. 4 - 9 pm. Entertainment, refreshments and a good cause. Central United Methodist Church, 3700 Pacific Ave, Stockton. Free admission. 462-3489.

SAT, DEC 2

31st annual Peaceful Holiday Gift Fair, featuring peace gifts. 10 am - 2 pm. Entertainment, refreshments and a good cause. Central United Methodist Church, 3700 Pacific Ave, Stockton. Free admission. 462-3489.

SAT-SUN, DEC 2-3

26th annual Festival of Trees, with over 60 uniquely decorated trees, kids activities, entertainment, make-and-take crafts and more. 10 am - 4 pm.

SJ County Historical Museum, 11793 N Mickle Grove Rd, Lodi. \$10 general, \$1 kids 2 - 12, under 2 free. All funds raised benefit youth education. 331-2055. www.sanjoaquinhistory.org

SUN, DEC 3

University Symphony Wind Ensemble and Concert Band, Eric Hammer director. 7:30 pm, Faye Spanos Concert Hall, 3511 Pacific Ave, Stockton. \$10 adult, \$5 senior, students free.

TUE, DEC 5 Stockton Concert

Band Holiday Concert, 7 pm, Atherton Auditorium, SJ Delta College, Stockton. Still only \$8; \$5 for students and seniors over 61, children under 12 free. 209-951-5110. Stockton City Council meeting, 5:30 pm. City Hall, 425 N El Dorado St, Stockton 209-937-8827

WED, DEC 6

SJDC Symphonic Band and Lathrop High School Symphonic Band Concert, 7 pm, Atherton Auditorium, SJ Delta College, Stockton. Still only \$8; \$5 for students and seniors over 61, children under 12 free. 209-951-5110.

THURS, DEC 7

Peace & Justice Network board meeting, John Morearty Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. 7 pm. All welcome. 467-4455

THURS, DEC 7

SJDC Winter Festival of Choirs, 7:30 pm. Atherton Auditorium, SJ Delta College, Stockton. Still only \$8; \$5 for students and seniors over 61, children under 12 free. 209-951-5110.

FRI, DEC 8

UOP Holiday Choir Concert, 7:30 pm. Morris Chapel, 620 Chapel Ln, Stockton. \$10 adult, \$5 senior, students free.

SAT, DEC 9

A Joy Filled Christmas, 6 pm St Mary's High School, 5648 N El Dorado St, Stockton. celebrating the joy of Christmas through music featuring UOP students and local professional musicians, with performances by St. Mary's High School student bands and choir. Free admission. Info: dtanner@saintmaryshighschool.org

SUN, DEC 10

"It's a Big Band Christmas" 2 pm, Columbia College Dogwood Theater. Guest Paul Contos on woodwinds, jazzy versions of all your holiday favorites, plus lots of vocals \$15 reserved. Advanced tickets at Mt. Bookshop Sonora or Columbia College Bookstore @ 588-5126.

MON, DEC 11

Delta Sierra Club Fourth Annual Environmental Holiday Gathering , The aesthetics of John Muir's natural world, 6:30 pm. Fireside Room, Central United Methodist Church Fireside Room, 3700 Pacific Ave, Stockton. Free. All welcome. 209-670-4442. (p 18)

Thurs, Dec 14

Stockton Planning Commission meeting, 6:00 pm. City Hall, 425 N El Dorado St, Stockton 209-937-8266

SAT, DEC 16

The Nutcracker performed by the Capitol Ballet Company with guest dancers from the Stockton Ballet School. 2 pm. Atherton Auditorium, SJ Delta College, 5151 Pacific Ave, Stockton. \$16 - \$26. 954-5110. www.capitolballet.com 954-5110.

THURS, DEC 21

Renaissance Choir Sacramento at the Haggin 1st & 3rd Thursdays 6-9 pm. A retrospective of seasonal repertoire the Choir has sung in past holiday seasons, with works by Victoria, Hassler, Praetorius, Merbecke and Guerrero, and with additional Noel settings by Brumel and Busnois. Spirited audience participation is encouraged in a series of carols ancient and modern. Adult \$8, youth \$5, under 10 free with adult. Haggin Museum, Victory Park, 1201 N. Pershing Ave, Stockton, CA (209) 940-6300.

THURS, DEC 28

The Sky Dome Planetarium Event, Chavez Library, 605 N El Dorado St, Stockton. Take a 45-minute journey to the stars, and learn more about constellations and the origin of many astronomical patterns from Greek Myths. 1 pm and 3 pm.

THURS, JAN 4

Peace & Justice Network board meeting, John Morearty Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. 7 pm. All welcome. 467-4455

THURS, JAN 11

Stockton Planning Commission meeting, 5:30 pm. City Hall, 425 N El Dorado St, Stockton 209-937-8266

FRI, JAN 12

Stockton Opera presents Hansel & Gretel, 7:30 pm at Faye Spanos Concert Hall University of the Pacific. Tickets \$16.50, \$34.50 and \$44.50 available from Stockton Symphony Box Office 209-951-0196 www.stocktonsymphony.org

SUN, JAN 14

Stockton Opera presents Hansel & Gretel, 2:00 pm at Faye Spanos Concert Hall University of the Pacific. Tickets \$16.50, \$34.50 and \$44.50 available from Stockton Symphony Box Office 209-951-0196 www.stocktonsymphony.org

THURS-SUN JAN 17 - FEB 4

You Can't Take It With You by George S Kaufman & Moss Hart. Opening Wed 7:30, Thur-Sat 7:30 pm, Sun 2:30 pm. Stockton Civic Theatre, 2312 Rosemarie Lane, Stockton. Martin Vanderhof, mostly referred to as Grandpa, is the patriarch of three generations of a slightly bonkers New York City family all living together under the same roof. Hilarity ensues when his granddaughter invites her fiancée's uptight family over for dinner. The dinner guests also include a Russian ballet instructor, an alcoholic actress, and a delivery man who came into the house 8 years before and never left. You Can't Take It With You premiered on Broadway in 1936 and won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama.. \$15 - \$27. 473-2424. www.sctlivetheatre.com



MON, JAN 22

Delta Sierra Club meeting: A Cornish Miner from Bodie from the past visits Stockton. 7 pm. Fireside Room, Central United Methodist Church Fireside Room, 3700 Pacific Ave, Stockton. Free. All welcome. 209-670-4442. (p 18)

SAT, JAN 27

Stockton Symphony presents Classics 3, works by Khachaturian and Mussorgsky-Ravel with guest pianist Kerson Leong. 6 pm, Atherton Auditorium, 5151 Pacific Ave, Stockton. Adult \$25-67, student \$10-15. 951-0196.

SUN, FEB 25

Peace & Justice Network annual potluck and meeting, 4 - 7 pm. Morearty Peace Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. 467-4455.

FIRST SATURDAYS

Free Yoga. Victory Park, 1201 N. Pershing Ave, Stockton, 9 - 10 am. Yoga in the Park is every first Saturday of the month until November. Free admission.

SECOND THURSDAYS

Single Payer San Joaquin, 6:30 pm at the John Morearty Peace and Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton

SECOND SATURDAYS

Stockton Citizens' Climate Lobby, 9:30 am - noon at the John Morearty Peace and Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton

FOURTH MONDAYS

Sierra Club 7 pm. Central United Methodist Church Fireside Room, 3700 Pacific Ave, Stockton. 7 pm program with social time following. All welcome.

MONDAYS

Community Radio Council Meeting, 7 - 9 pm, Morearty Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. 467-4455.

THURSDAYS

Peace demonstration, 5-6 pm, (4-5 pm when daylight time savings time ends) edge of Delta campus on Pacific, across from Macy's. Free parking at mall. Weekly since 2003. We have signs, or bring your own. We get LOTS of honks! Info 464-3326.

THURSDAYS

Take Five Jazz club, 7 - 10 pm, Valley Brew

FRIDAYS

Peace demonstration, 5-6 pm, corner of Highway 4 & 49 in Angels Camp. Bring a sign with a positive message. We get LOTS of honks! Info 559-6279.

FRIDAYS

Jazz jam at Whirlow's, 7 pm, Whirlow's Tossed & Grilled, 1926 Pacific Avenue, Stockton. Enjoy a live jazz jam session every Friday at Whirlow's on Stockton's historic Miracle Mile! Bring your instruments and join the jam! Hosted by Philip Bailey. Free cover. 466-2823

FRIDAYS

Live Music at Mile Wine Company, 7 - 10:30 pm. 2113 Pacific Ave, Stockton. Free. 465-9463

SATURDAYS

Crosstown Freeway Farmers Market, under the freeway between El Dorado & San Joaquin, Stockton. 7 - 11, or when sold out. 943-1830

SATURDAYS

Live Music at Mile Wine Company, 7 - 10:30 pm. 2113 Pacific Ave, Stockton. Free. 465-9463

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Patriotism, taxes, and Trump

ROBERT REICH

Selling the Trump-Republican tax plan should be awkward for an administration that has made patriotism its central theme. That's because patriotism isn't mostly about saluting the flag and standing during the national anthem. It's about taking a fair share of the burden of keeping America going. But the tax plan gives American corporations a \$2 trillion tax break, at a time when they're enjoying record profits and stashing unprecedented amounts of cash in offshore tax shelters. And it gives America's wealthiest citizens trillions more, when the richest 1 percent now hold a record 38.6 percent of the nation's total wealth, up from 33.7 percent a decade ago.

The reason Republicans give for enacting the plan is "supply-side" trickle-down nonsense. The real reason is payback to the GOP's mega-donors. A few Republicans are starting to admit this. Last week, Gary Cohn, Trump's lead economic advisor, conceded in an interview that "the most excited group out there are big CEOs, about our tax plan." Republican Rep. Chris Collins admitted that "my donors are basically saying, 'Get it done or don't ever call me again.'" Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham warned that if Republicans failed to pass tax reform, "the financial contributions will stop."

Republican mega-donors view the tax payback as they do any other investment. When they bankrolled Trump and the GOP, they expected a good return. The biggest likely beneficiaries are busily investing an additional \$43 million to pressure specific members of Congress to pass it, according to *The Wall Street Journal*. They include the 45Committee, founded by billionaire casino oligarch Sheldon Adelson and Todd Ricketts, whose family owns the Chicago Cubs; and the Koch Brothers' groups, Americans for Prosperity and Freedom Partners. They're not doing this out of love of America. They're doing it out of love of mon-

ey. How do you think they got so wealthy in the first place?

As more of the nation's wealth has shifted to the top over the past three decades, major recipients have poured some of it into politics – buying themselves tax cuts, special subsidies, bailouts, lenient antitrust enforcement, favorable bankruptcy rules, extended intellectual property protection, and other laws that add to their wealth. All of which have given them more clout to get additional legal changes that enlarge their wealth even more. Forty years ago, the estate tax was paid by 139,000 estates, according to the non-partisan Tax Policy Center. By 2000, it was paid by 52,000. This year it will be paid by just 5,500 estates. Under the House tax plan, it will be eliminated altogether.

Why do Americans pay more for pharmaceuticals than the citizens of every other advanced economy? Because Big Pharma has altered the laws in its favor. Why do we pay more for internet service than most other nations? Big cable's political clout. Why can payday lenders get away with payday robbery? The political heft of big banks.

Multiply these examples across the economy and you get a huge hidden upward redistribution from the paychecks of average working people and the poor to top executives and investors. (I explain this in detail in the documentary "Saving Capitalism," airing next week on Netflix.) All this is terrible for the American economy.

More and better jobs depend on increasing demand for goods and services. This must come from the middle class and poor because the rich spend a far smaller share of their after-tax income. Yet the middle class and poor have steadily lost purchasing power. Partly as a result, a relatively low share of the nation's working-age population is employed today and the wages of the typical worker have been stuck in the mud.

The Republican tax plan will make all this

worse by burdening the middle class and the poor even more. A slew of analyses, including Congress's own Joint Committee on Taxation, show that the GOP plan will raise taxes on many middle-class families. It will also require cuts in government programs that middle and lower-income Americans depend on, such as Medicare and Medicaid. And the plan will almost certainly explode the national debt, eventually causing many middle class and poor families to pay higher interest on their auto loans, mortgages, and credit cards.

I don't care whether the top executives of big corporations, Wall Street moguls, and heirs to vast fortunes salute the flag and stand for the national anthem. But they enjoy all the advantages of being American. Most couldn't have got to where they are in any other country. They have a patriotic duty to take on a fair share of the burden of keeping America going. And Trump and his enablers in Congress have a patriotic responsibility to make them.

ROBERT REICH, IS THE CHANCELLOR'S PROFESSOR OF PUBLIC POLICY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY, AND A SENIOR FELLOW AT THE BLUM CENTER FOR DEVELOPING ECONOMIES. HE SERVED AS SECRETARY OF LABOR IN THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION, AND TIME MAGAZINE NAMED HIM ONE

OF THE 10 MOST EFFECTIVE CABINET SECRETARIES OF THE 20TH CENTURY. HE HAS WRITTEN 14 BOOKS, INCLUDING THE BEST-SELLERS *AFTERSHOCK*, *THE WORK OF NATIONS*, *BEYOND OUTRAGE* AND, MOST RECENTLY, *SAVING CAPITALISM*. HE IS ALSO A FOUNDING EDITOR OF THE AMERICAN PROSPECT

MAGAZINE, CHAIRMAN OF COMMON CAUSE, A MEMBER OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES AND CO-CREATOR OF THE AWARD-WINNING DOCUMENTARY "INEQUALITY FOR ALL."

Source: RobertReich.org 11/13/17