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Aides say the president is already eager to engage in negotiations ahead of the next deadline in early February.

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JOHN SHINKLE/POLITICO

"We had hoped to achieve more," Senate Minority Whip Dick Durbin (center) said Tuesday. "We did achieve something significant. We have a deadline, we have a process, and I think that deadline is right near us."

## Dem backbiting persists after shutdown defeat

Senate Democrats' decision to fund the government without securing relief for Dreamers has fueled a rebellion on the left

BY ELANA SCHOR AND HEATHER CAYGLE

Senate Democrats struggled to hit the reboot button Tuesday, a day after their shutdown defeat, with their base infuriated and their House counterparts alienated.

Senate Minority Whip Dick Durbin (D-Ill.), a close ally of Dreamer advocates, urged disap-

pointed liberals to stay focused on Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's vow to open debate on immigration legislation in February if no deal is reached by Feb. 8, when government funding next runs out.

"We had hoped to achieve more," Durbin told reporters. "We did achieve something significant. We have a deadline, we

have a process, and I think that deadline is right near us. It isn't like they're asking for six months or a year. It's 16 days."

But the start of a Senate debate isn't enough for many House Democrats or activists, who fear Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) won't consider any bipartisan Senate deal to help the young undocu-

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## Trump sets Cabinet free to shape agenda

BY NANCY COOK

President Donald Trump's administration is now embroiled in an all-consuming fight with the Hill over immigration and there's no guarantee that its push for an infrastructure plan will go anywhere — but a robust agenda that covers everything from entitlements to oil exploration is bubbling

up from below.

While the Obama administration infamously micromanaged policy from the West Wing, the Trump White House has given Cabinet secretaries and agency chiefs almost total freedom to do what they want, according to two close advisers to the White House.

Since the start of the year, the

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services has quietly opened the door to sharply limiting Medicaid; the Department of Homeland Security has revoked a special immigration status for Salvadorans; and the Department of Interior has moved to open up federal land to offshore drilling.

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## Immigration talks bog down despite deadline

Senators can barely agree on the terms of negotiation, let alone make a Dreamers deal

BY SEUNG MIN KIM AND BURGESS EVERET

Senators crashing on a two-week deadline to come up with an immigration plan are already sparring over funding for President Donald Trump's border wall, what qualifies as border security — even what the scope of the negotiations are.

It was an inauspicious start Tuesday to the bipartisan effort to break the monthslong impasse over Dreamers and the budget that crescendoed with last weekend's government shutdown. That crisis ended quickly, but Congress could be back in almost the same spot in two weeks absent a deal that can get 60 votes.

The path to 60, though, looks rocky indeed.

Though Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has pledged to take up an immigration bill, what it would look like is anyone's guess. Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) revealed Tuesday he

yanked his massive earlier offer of \$25 billion in wall funding — a move that angered top Republicans and potentially undercut negotiations among a slew of senators trying to craft an immigration plan that can pass.

An initial gang of six senators has casually doubled, but some members aren't deeply versed in immigration policy. The group's leaders say their plan is by far the most developed proposal that can attract Democrats and Republicans, but conservatives with Trump's ear say the administration has no interest negotiating off their bill.

The goal is seemingly straightforward: enshrining the Obama-era Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program that protects from deportation young immigrants brought to the country as children, but which Trump decided to end. But the negotiations

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## Meehan called harassment accuser his 'soul mate'

LOREM IPSUM

Rep. Patrick Meehan said Tuesday that he is still running for reelection even as he acknowledged "affection" for a former aide whom he considered a "soul mate" — before using taxpayer money to pay off a sexual harassment claim she later pursued against him.

The Pennsylvania Republican's open discussion of his feelings for his former aide, in interviews with local media outlets, comes days after his spokesman denied that any harassment occurred and said Meehan's conduct toward all of his aides displayed "the utmost respect and professionalism."

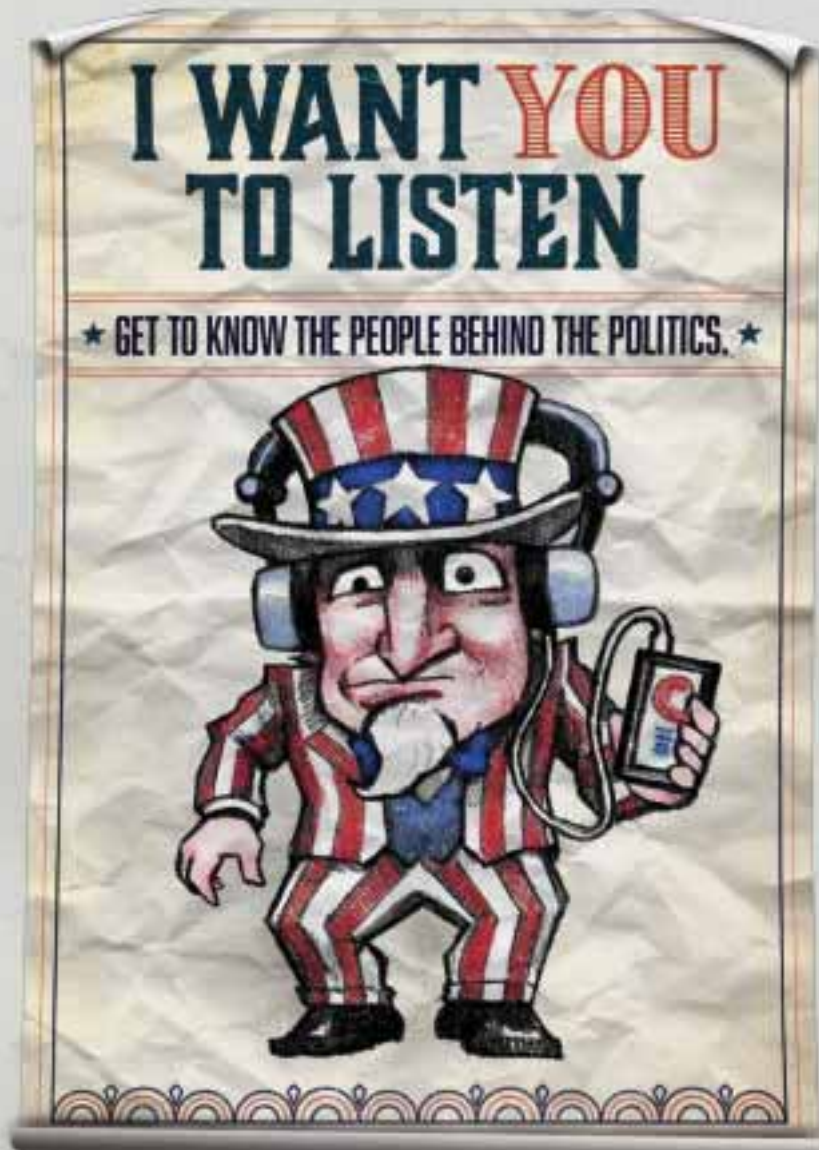
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J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE/AP

Rep. Patrick Meehan says he will run for reelection despite accusations of sexual harassment.

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**OFF**  **MESSAGE**

What's really driving politics with **Isaac Dove**.



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45 FORTY FIVE

A daily diary of the Trump presidency

### Sanders: White House supports 'full transparency' around memo criticizing FBI

The White House backs "full transparency" around a secret congressional memo critical of top officials at the FBI, but the House Intelligence Committee should decide whether to release it, White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said Tuesday.

"We certainly support full transparency, and we believe that's at the House Intel Committee to make that choice at this point," Sanders said at the White House press briefing.

The four-page memo, compiled by committee Chairman Devin Nunes (R-Calif.), was circulated among House members last week but has yet to be made available to the public.

According to people with knowledge of the memo, it alleges that senior FBI officials improperly used a secret surveillance program, commonly known as FISA, to target the Trump campaign. Numerous Republican lawmakers have cited the memo over the past week to claim the existence of bias against President Donald Trump at the FBI, though Democrats say the memo is a partisan attempt to distract from the investigations into Russian meddling in the 2016 election.

Republicans are also mounting a push to give Trump final say on whether to authorize the document's release.

"I think given the seriousness of this one and the players, this should go to the president first," said Rep. Mike Conaway (R-Texas) on Monday.

—Cristiano Lima

### Trump slams CNN's 'Crazy Jim Acosta' in shutdown victory lap tweet

President Donald Trump on Tuesday celebrated the end of a government shutdown with a tweet citing a reporter from perhaps his least favorite media outlet: CNN.

"Even Crazy Jim Acosta of Fake News CNN agrees: 'Trump World and WH sources dancing in end zone: Trump wins again...Schumer and Dems caved...gambled and lost.' Thank you for your honesty Jim!" Trump wrote online Tuesday morning.

"Nobody knows for sure that the Republicans & Democrats will be able to reach a deal on DACA by February 8, but everyone will be trying...with a big additional focus put on Military Strength and Border Security. The Dems have just learned that a Shutdown is not the answer!" the president added in a second post later Tuesday morning.

Trump's tweet appeared to cite Acosta's reporting and Twitter account, not the CNN reporter's own sentiments. Acosta, CNN's chief White House correspondent, has at times drawn the ire of Trump supporters for his particularly pointed and, at times, confrontational lines of questioning during news briefings.



WALTER BIERI/KEystone VIA AP

## Davos demonstrators meet deal-maker

As President Donald Trump prepares to take his message to invest in the U.S. to the world economic forum, demonstrators in Davos push their own message this week: "Trump not welcome!" First lady Melania Trump had planned to accompany the president to Zurich, Switzerland, but she has had a change in plans.

—Alex Isenstadt

In addition to his frequent attacks against the mainstream media in general, Trump has often directed specific ire toward CNN, the network to whose name he often affixes a "fake news" prefix. The president's complaints about CNN's coverage of him, which he views as unfair, have trickled down to his base of supporters, many of whom have also begun to distrust the network.

Atlanta's CBS affiliate reported this week that a Michigan man had been arrested after threatening a CNN operator, saying, "Fake news. I'm coming to gun you all down."

After shuttering the government for three days over an impasse on immigration issues, the Senate voted Monday to reopen the government, with Democrats agreeing to support government funding legislation in exchange for a promise from Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell to bring up a bill in the coming weeks to address protections for undocumented immigrants brought to the U.S. as children. The compromise has been characterized as a victory for Republicans.

—Louis Nelson

### Trump denies reports FBI director threatened to resign

President Donald Trump on Tuesday denied reports that FBI Director Christopher Wray threatened to resign amid growing pressure from the White House and Attorney General Jeff Sessions.

"No. He didn't at all. He did not even a little bit," the president said when pressed on the matter by reporters during an Oval Office event. "He's going to do a good job."

According to Axios, Wray was urged by Sessions and Trump to fire his deputy, Andrew McCabe, but resisted. Conservatives

have focused on McCabe in their questions about whether the bureau was impartial in its investigation of former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in 2016. McCabe drew their attention because his wife, Jill McCabe, once received campaign contributions from a Clinton ally, though the FBI has said that occurred months before her husband became involved in the Clinton probe.

The president also griped on Twitter in December about Wray's handling of the Justice Department probe into Russian election meddling.

Trump on Tuesday also said he was not worried that Sessions testified last week before federal investigators as part of special counsel Robert Mueller's probe into Russian election interference and ties to the Trump campaign.

"No, I'm not at all concerned," the president said.

—Cristiano Lima

### Tillerson: Russia 'bears responsibility' for suspected chemical attack in Syria

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson on Tuesday denounced the recent suspected chemical attack in Syria and said "Russia ultimately bears responsibility" for the victims because it has enabled President Bashar Assad.

Rescue teams and activists said Monday that Assad's government used a poisonous gas on Syrian civilians in an attack that affected at least 20 individuals, including some children, in a rebel-held region near Damascus.

Tillerson, speaking at a conference in Paris, called on the Syrian leader to cease the use of deadly weapons on civilians.

"The recent attacks in East Ghouta raise serious concerns that Bashar al-Assad's Syrian regime may be continuing its use of chemical weapons against its own people," Tillerson said.

The U.S.'s top diplomat added that while Assad is suspected of carrying out the attack, countries like Russia and its leader, President Vladimir Putin, were also culpable, the latest sign the Trump administration is growing more willing to put pressure on Russia.

"Whoever conducted the attacks, Russia ultimately bears responsibility for the victims in East Ghouta and countless other Syrians targeted with chemical weapons since Russia became involved in Syria," Tillerson said.

Tillerson's remarks on Russia came after President Donald Trump appeared to toughen his tone on Putin during an interview with Reuters last week, after saying frequently that he wanted to strengthen ties with Moscow. Trump said in the interview that the country was "not helping us at all" in attempts to temper North Korea's weapons testing.

"What China is helping us with, Russia is denting," Trump said. "In other words, Russia is making up for some of what China is doing."

Tillerson on Tuesday also stressed the need for the international community to deny "impunity to those who use or enable the use" of chemical weapons.

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley declared in a statement Tuesday that the suspected attack was "yet another demonstration" of Syria's "blatant disregard for international law and cruel indifference for the lives of its own people."

"The United States will never stop fighting for the innocent Syrian children, women, and men who have become victims of their own government and those who continue to prop it up," Haley said.

—Cristiano Lima

### Trump to address annual RNC meeting at his D.C. hotel

President Donald Trump is slated to address Republican National Committee members on Feb. 1 at their annual winter meeting in Washington, D.C., according to a GOP source briefed on the plans.

Trump's evening appearance, which comes at the outset of what is expected to be a challenging midterm year for Republicans, will take place at his downtown Trump hotel.

Vice President Mike Pence is expected to speak at an RNC member lunch earlier in the day.

The RNC gathering will kick off Jan. 31 at the Washington Hilton and conclude two days later. The 2018 midterms will be front and center at the confab. But party officials are taking initial steps to plan for the next presidential election cycle. Among the topics to be discussed: early planning for the 2020 convention, with a site selection committee slated to meet.

### Trump praises Kelly amid reports of in-house tension

President Donald Trump praised chief of staff John Kelly on Tuesday, saying he overcame "fake reporting" to do a "fantastic job," after reports the relationship between the two was fraying.

"Thank you to General John Kelly, who is doing a fantastic job, and all of the Staff and others in the White House, for a job well done," the president tweeted. "Long hours and Fake reporting makes your job more difficult, but it is always great to WIN, and few have won more than us!"

Vanity Fair reported Monday that Trump had fumed over Kelly's large presence in the administration, lamenting to a friend that he has "another nut job here who thinks he's running things," according to a source briefed on the discussion. Kelly in turn has "expressed frustration with Trump's freewheeling management style and habit of making offensive statements," Vanity Fair said.

Tensions appeared to spill into public view last week when Trump directly contradicted Kelly's characterization of the president's views on immigration.

During an interview on Fox News on Wednesday, Kelly said Trump's stance on immigration had "evolved" with respect to his proposed wall along the U.S. border with Mexico. Kelly added that Trump had "changed the way he's looked at a number of things" and was considering many practical solutions to improving border security.

"There's been an evolutionary process that this president has gone through," Kelly added.

Trump directly contradicted Kelly's remarks on Twitter the following morning.

"The Wall is the Wall, it has never changed or evolved from the first day I conceived of it," the president wrote in a series of tweets.

—Cristiano Lima

# Mueller's team interviews Sessions in Russia probe

It's his first interview with special counsel

BY JOSH GERSTEIN

Special counsel Robert Mueller's investigators interviewed Attorney General Jeff Sessions for several hours last week as part of the ongoing probe into ties between Russia and President Donald Trump's campaign, two Justice Department officials said Tuesday.

The interview with Sessions took place more than seven months after Mueller was appointed, and it came as Trump continues to complain publicly about the investigation.

Sessions, who was a top adviser to Trump during the 2016 presidential campaign, played a role in events touching on several threads of the special counsel's inquiry. Perhaps most significantly, he was involved in Oval Office discussions that led to the firing of FBI Director James Comey last March.

The attorney general also wrote a memo endorsing Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein's letter justifying the FBI chief's firing based on missteps related to the Hillary Clinton email investigation. Trump later acknowledged that at least part of his reason for axing Comey was ongoing irritation at the FBI's investigation into alleged collusion between his campaign and Russia.

Other witnesses have said Mueller is investigating events surrounding the firing and whether they amounted to attempts to interfere with the Russia probe, which the special counsel took over after Comey's exit.

Sessions' personal attorney, Chuck Cooper, accompanied him for the interview, which was the attorney general's first with the Mueller team, officials said. The



Jeff Sessions met at least twice with the Russian ambassador to the U.S., but did not disclose those meetings as he was facing confirmation for attorney general. He later said he didn't think the encounters were relevant because they were in his capacity as a senator, not as a Trump campaign official.

SAUL LOEB/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

questioning of Sessions comes relatively late in Mueller's investigation. Several senior White House aides were questioned in November and December.

A spokesman for Mueller declined to comment on what he called "our ongoing investigation." The interview was first reported by The New York Times.

Pressed on whether he is worried about one of his Cabinet members meeting with federal prosecutors,

Trump told reporters at the White House on Tuesday he is "not at all concerned."

Sessions also met on at least two occasions with the Russian ambassador to the U.S., but he did not disclose those meetings as he was facing confirmation. He later said he didn't think the encounters were relevant because they were in his capacity as a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, not as a campaign official.

Sessions also attended meetings of Trump's foreign policy team, including a March 2016 round-table gathering attended by George Papadopoulos, who has since pleaded guilty to making false statements to the FBI about his contacts with advocates for Russia. He is cooperating with investigators and awaiting sentencing.

Carter Page, another foreign policy adviser to the Trump campaign who has drawn attention from

Mueller's team and congressional investigators, testified that he told Sessions about a planned trip to Russia during the run-up to the 2016 election. Sessions has said he does not recall the exchange.

Sessions recused himself from the Russia inquiry early on in his tenure as attorney general, a decision that infuriated Trump.

Cristiano Lima contributed to this report.

## Senate Intel heads aim to restore limits on administration intelligence activities

BY ELANA SCHOR

Both parties' leaders on the Senate Intelligence Committee vowed Tuesday to ensure that the next government funding bill restores limits on the Trump administration's intelligence powers — constraints that were removed in the short-term agreement that ended the shutdown.

At issue for Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Richard Burr (R-N.C.) and Vice Chairman Mark Warner (D-Va.) was a provision in the stopgap spending bill that states that intelligence agencies are not subject to a statute that bars spending on activities not expressly authorized by Congress.

Burr and Warner sought the removal of the provision before lawmakers voted Monday to approve a deal to fund the government until Feb. 8, but their proposal was met with an objection by Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Thad Cochran (R-Miss.).

The language in Monday's stopgap spending bill is structured as a waiver of an existing law, Burr told reporters Tuesday, and "I intend to make sure the waiver is not part of any legislation in the future."

Warner suggested that he and



J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE/AP

Sens. Mark Warner (left) and Richard Burr object to a provision in the stopgap spending bill that would permit activities not authorized by Congress.

Burr might also examine options to restore the limits even before Feb. 8. The Virginian also questioned why House Intelligence Committee members would assent to a provision in the funding bill that risks limiting their oversight authority.

"I continue to be baffled by the House, and I continue to wonder why House Intel would go along with any of this," Warner told reporters Tuesday. "I'm still curious to find out where this idea originated."

A House Intelligence Committee source said that the panel also

registered its objections to the language to no avail: "The House Intel Committee opposed this, but as in the Senate, we were unsuccessful. It passed at the insistence of the Appropriations Committee."

The Senate appropriations panel cited Cochran's remarks on the floor Monday, in which he noted that the provision Burr and Warner objected to "is consistent with language that has been adopted many times in past continuing resolutions." Cochran also said he would work with the intelligence panel on resolving the matter.

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# Trump nominee Powell confirmed as Fed chairman

Yellen successor OK'd in a bipartisan vote

BY VICTORIA GUIDA

The Senate on Tuesday ushered in the Donald Trump era at the Federal Reserve, confirming Jerome Powell, the president's pick to chair the world's most important central bank, in a bipartisan 85-12 vote.

Trump chose Powell over outgoing Chair Janet Yellen, breaking with the precedent for presidents to renominate Fed chairs they inherit and continuing his drive to ditch policies and personnel put in place by former President Barack Obama.

But Trump's Fed might not be radically different from that of the Obama years. The Fed under Powell will likely continue its path of steady interest rate increases — three are projected for 2018 — and cautious removal of its decadelong extraordinary support for the U.S. economy.

Powell joined the Fed board in 2012 as an Obama appointee, and since then he has worked with Yellen and her predecessor, Ben Bernanke, to craft the central bank's monetary and regulatory policy in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis.

The economic recovery is in its ninth year, one of the longest in American history, and Trump's choice of Powell is seen as a desire for policy continuity, even as he represents a change in style from Yellen.

"The best way to sustain the recovery, I believe, is to continue on this path of gradual interest rate increases," Powell said at his confirmation hearing in November.

Most of the "no" votes Powell received when he was first nominated to the Fed came from Republicans. This time around, only Sens. Ted Cruz (R-Texas), Mike Lee (R-Utah), Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) and Rand Paul (R-Ky.) joined Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and seven Democrats in opposing Powell. Yellen's term as chair ends on Feb. 3.

Powell, who will take the helm of the central bank just ahead of his 65th birthday, is a Republican who worked in George H.W. Bush's Treasury Department, as well as in investment banking and private equity. He is trained as a lawyer rather than an economist, though he has worked in the financial world for most of his career.

The new chair will have to fight lingering questions about how he would handle a crisis, since he is



CAROLYN KASTER/AP

The Federal Reserve under Jerome Powell will likely continue its path of steady interest rate increases — three are projected for 2018 — and cautious removal of its decadelong extraordinary support for the economy. Powell joined the Fed board in 2012 as an Obama appointee.

not a Ph.D. economist like his predecessors have been for decades. That fact also could confer more power on his yet-to-be-nominated vice chair, who will likely be an economist, as well as on the not-yet-chosen incoming president of the New York Fed.

But his lack of academic background could also have a positive effect for people hoping to better understand the Fed. According to transcripts of years-old Fed policy meetings, Powell has consistently advocated for plainer language in official communications, rather than the jargon-filled "Fedspeak."

That difference was on display at his November confirmation hearing, where instead of using terms like "policy accommodation," he simply said: "I think that the case for raising interest rates at our next meeting is coming together."

Another difference is his extensive experience in the private sector, which separates him from past Fed chairs. As a partner at prominent private equity firm the Carlyle Group, Powell sat on the boards of a number of companies, including Dr Pepper/7 Up, Panolam Industries International, and Rexnord Corp.

He has also experienced the banking world from multiple sides of the table. He spent years at former investment bank Dillon, Read & Co., and four years at law firms representing banks. While at Treasury, he took the lead in negotiating sanctions against investment bank Salomon Bros. for placing illegal bids on Treasury securities.

And since he has been at the Fed, he has played an influential role in regulatory policy, implementing the landmark 2010 Dodd-Frank

Act, which imposed layers of new rules aimed at decreasing banks' reliance on debt and increasing their cash on hand.

That background help bolster his credibility among Democrats, the vast majority of whom voted for him.

"Gov. Powell played a significant role in implementing crucial reforms under Dodd-Frank," Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) said in a floor speech in support of Powell. "He understands the importance of the rules for stress tests, capital standards, and resolution planning. We need the Federal Reserve to make sure those rules are applied thoroughly and consistently, so that gaps or failures don't create larger risks for the financial system."

Powell will probably be more interested in specific regulatory

policy details than any Fed chair in history, making his relationship with newly minted Fed regulatory czar Randal Quarles a key one. Powell and Quarles are good friends who have known each other for decades, but Quarles seems slightly more inclined to loosen regulation than his soon-to-be boss.

Powell could also soon see another colleague join the Fed ranks. Carnegie Mellon professor Marvin Goodfriend, nominated for an open seat on the seven-member Fed board, had his nomination hearing before the Senate Banking Committee on Tuesday.

Until then, the Fed board looks poised to dwindle to three, once Yellen departs — an unprecedented occurrence assuring that the schedules of Powell, Quarles and Fed Gov. Lael Brainard will become even more demanding.



J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE/AP

Illinois Sen. Tammy Duckworth, who lost her legs while serving in Iraq, said she is "thrilled that our family is getting a little bit bigger."

## Tammy Duckworth to become first senator to give birth while in office

BY AYANNA ALEXANDER

Tammy Duckworth is set to make history as the first senator to give birth while in office.

"Bryan and I are thrilled that our family is getting a little bit bigger, and Abigail is ecstatic to welcome her baby sister home this spring," the Illinois Democrat said in a statement on Tuesday, referring to her husband and their 3-year-old daughter.

Duckworth, 49, was elected to

the Senate in 2016 after serving two terms in the House. Before entering Congress, she served in the Illinois and U.S. departments of Veterans' Affairs, and she retired from the Army in 2014 as a lieutenant colonel.

In 2004, while serving in Iraq as a helicopter pilot, Duckworth lost both her legs and partial use of her right arm when her aircraft was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade.

Sen. Dick Durbin, Illinois' senior

senator and the assistant Democratic leader, congratulated her.

"From the moment she came into my office 13 years ago, I knew that Tammy Duckworth was one of the most extraordinary people I would ever meet," he said in a statement. "I am proud to have her as my Illinois colleague and prouder still that she will make history by being the first U.S. Senator to have a baby while in office. I couldn't be happier for her."

# Biden: McConnell rejected bipartisan front on Russia

'This was all about the political play'

BY EDWARD-ISAAC DOVERE

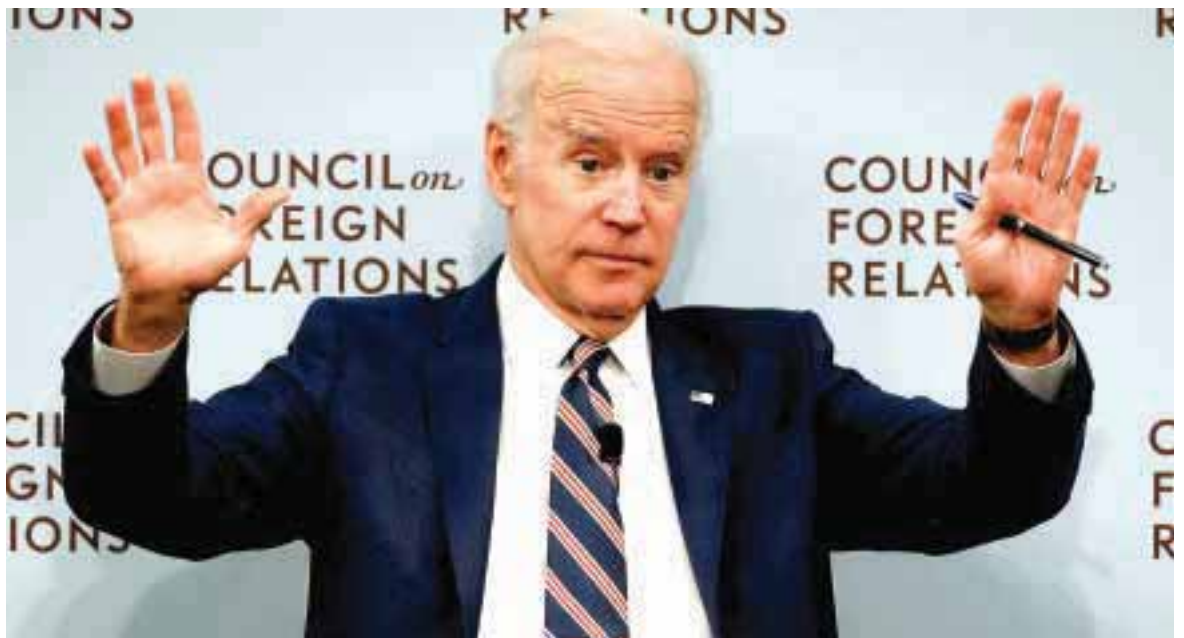
Joe Biden said Wednesday that Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell stopped the Obama administration from speaking out about Russian interference in the 2016 campaign by refusing to sign on to a bipartisan statement of condemnation.

That moment, the former Democratic vice president said, made him think "the die had been cast ... this was all about the political play."

He expressed regret, in hindsight, given the intelligence he says came in after Election Day. "Had we known what we knew three weeks later, we may have done something more," Biden, a potential 2020 presidential candidate, said.

Biden was speaking at an event hosted by the Council on Foreign Relations, a block from his old office at the Old Executive Office Building, to discuss his new article in the latest issue of Foreign Affairs, "How to Stand Up to the Kremlin." Biden said he and President Barack Obama worried that without a united, bipartisan front, speaking out before the election would undermine the legitimacy of the election and American institutions in a way that would play into the Russians' larger ambitions.

"Can you imagine if the president called a press conference in October, with this fella, [Steve] Bannon, and company, and said, 'Tell you what: Russians are trying to interfere in our elections and we have to do something about it,'" Biden said. "What do you think would have happened? Would things have gotten better, or would it further



"Had we known what we knew three weeks later, we may have done something more," said former Vice President Joe Biden, of the Obama administration's response to Russian interference in the 2016 election, during a speech to the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington on Tuesday. ALEX BRANDON/AP

look like we were trying to delegitimize the electoral process, because of our opponent?"

Spokespeople for McConnell and Obama didn't immediately return requests for comment.

There was a "constant tightrope," Biden said, with the Obama administration unable to decide what would count as saying too little or saying too much.

"The president and I would sit there literally after the [presidential

daily briefing], after everyone had left the room, and say, 'What the hell are we going to do?'" Biden recalled.

The Trump administration, Biden said, isn't doing much to counter Russian election interference and other disruptive activity around the world. He accused the current administration of "abdicating" its responsibility in that regard and squandering its power as a result.

Biden told Council on Foreign Relations President Richard Haass

that he wouldn't call the current conflict with Russia a second Cold War, because it's not a great ideological battle. Rather, Biden said, it's "just basically about a kleptocracy protecting itself." Figuring out how to make that case, he added, had led to an internal debate within the Obama administration about whether to make public its estimate of Russian president Vladimir Putin's personal wealth, which Biden suggested would make clear the

Russian leader had benefited massively from corruption. Biden said he'd pushed to do so.

Confused and frustrated foreign leaders around the world have continued to turn to him during the first year of Donald Trump's presidency, Biden said, and he continues to take their calls.

"The questions across the board range from, 'What the hell's going on, Joe?'" he said. "to 'What advice do you have for me?'"

## Nadler calls GOP memo criticizing FBI 'profoundly misleading'

BY KYLE CHENEY

Rep. Jerry Nadler, the top Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee, says he considers a GOP memo critical of top FBI officials "profoundly misleading" after seeing the highly classified source material Republicans used to craft it.

Few lawmakers have gotten access to the materials House Intelligence Committee Chairman Devin Nunes (R-Calif.) relied on to compile his four-page memo, which the committee circulated among all House members last week but has not made public. But Nadler (D-N.Y.) said in a letter released Tuesday that he and Judiciary Committee Chairman Bob Goodlatte recently had a chance to view the classified materials.

"Those materials tell a very different story than the conspiracy theory concocted by Chairman Nunes and being repeated in the press," Nadler wrote in the letter, which he addressed to Goodlatte (R-Va.).

A parade of GOP lawmakers this week have said the memo confirms misconduct and political bias against President Donald Trump by senior officials at the FBI. Democrats say the memo, which Republicans haven't shown to the FBI or Justice Department, is an attempt to undermine the special counsel

investigation into Russian election meddling and any involvement by Trump's associates.

Nunes and other top Republicans have been discussing whether to make an unprecedented request to release the classified memo publicly, using an obscure process that would give Trump a chance to weigh in — possibly as soon as next week — and could require a vote of the full House. Many conservatives in Congress and in the media have called on them to release the document.

see the underlying source material behind the memo, preventing them from assessing its accuracy.

Nadler urged Goodlatte to work with him to "make these source materials available to every member of our Committee."

"Too many of our colleagues appear to be constructing their own version of history — completely unrelated to the facts as you and I understand them — based, at least in part, on this memorandum," he wrote. "Our members should have

panel to share the document with senators.

"Some of our colleagues have compounded the problem by attacking the [Justice] Department in public — where, because of the classified and sensitive nature of the case, Department officials cannot defend themselves," Nadler wrote.

A House Intelligence Committee source said Nadler's complaint wasn't surprising. "It's not remarkable or surprising to hear other Democrats parrot Schiff's

request. If he were to approve, as GOP lawmakers expect, the memo could become public as soon as next Wednesday.

Sources familiar with the memo, which was compiled by aides to Nunes, say it claims senior FBI officials abused a secret surveillance program, commonly known as the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, to target the Trump campaign in fall 2016. According to three people who have viewed it, the memo suggests that FBI agents seeking a fall 2016 warrant to conduct surveillance of Trump campaign adviser Carter Page concealed the role a disputed dossier alleging Kremlin influence over Trump played in their decision.

The dossier the memo alleges helped drive the decision to seek a FISA warrant on Page was compiled in 2016 by former British spy Christopher Steele, a trusted FBI partner in previous investigations, who had been commissioned by the private research firm Fusion GPS to investigate Trump's business ties to Russia. Fusion's work was funded at that time by a lawyer who represented Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign and the Democratic National Committee. It's unclear whether Steele's relationship to the campaign was disclosed in the FISA application.

**"Some of our colleagues have compounded the problem by attacking the [Justice] Department in public — where, because of the classified and sensitive nature of the case, Department officials cannot defend themselves."**

— Rep. Jerry Nadler

Nadler's criticism of the memo adds to the partisan furor it's created on Capitol Hill. Rep. Adam Schiff of California, the top Democrat on the Intelligence Committee, has called the memo a set of "distortions" and Republican talking points meant to tar investigators and protect the president from ongoing Russia probes. Schiff also said most lawmakers would never

the benefit of access to the actual record without delay."

Nadler also urged Goodlatte to demand that Nunes release his memo to the Justice Department and FBI, both of which have said they've sought the document but have yet to receive it. A Senate Intelligence Committee source said Nunes also hasn't responded to requests from members of the

comments on this," the source said.

Goodlatte met over the weekend with Nunes and Oversight Committee Chairman Trey Gowdy (R-S.C.) to discuss how to handle calls to release the memo publicly. They're considering whether to take a committee vote to do so next week. If they do, it would launch a process that would give Trump five days to approve or reject the

# Poll: More blamed GOP-ers for shutdown than Dems

Most thought Trump did not do enough

BY STEVEN SHEPARD

Democrats blinked first in the shutdown standoff, but it wasn't public polling that pushed them to capitulate.

While Republicans gloated over a Senate vote to reopen the government on Monday — celebrating the Democrats' decision to accept a three-week extension in funding in exchange for a future vote on immigration policy — voters weren't necessarily blaming Democrats in large numbers for the shutdown.

According to a POLITICO/Morning Consult poll conducted Saturday and Sunday, a combined 48 percent of voter respondents said President Donald Trump (34 percent) and Republicans in Congress (15 percent) were to blame for the shutdown — more than the 35 percent who said congressional Democrats bore most of the blame.

And a majority of voters, 53 percent, thought Trump hadn't done enough to bring the parties together — compared with 29 percent who thought Trump had done enough.

After the Senate vote to approve government funding through Feb. 8, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said he will give bipartisan negotiators three more weeks to reach a broader deal on immigration policy — and, if they can't, he will permit a vote to codify protections for undocumented immigrants brought to the U.S. as children.

Those immigrants, who have enjoyed protection under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program in recent years, were the main sticking point for most Democrats. Republicans felt in recent days that they were winning the political argument over the shutdown.



Sens. Lindsey Graham (left), Susan Collins and Jeff Flake meet the media after attending a bipartisan meeting Monday during the shutdown. A combined 48 percent of voters in a POLITICO/Morning Consult poll said President Donald Trump and congressional Republicans were to blame for the shutdown.

JACQUELYN MARTIN/AP

But the POLITICO/Morning Consult poll actually shows an uptick in voter support for shutting down the government over protections for 'Dreamers,' said Morning Consult co-founder and Chief Research Officer Kyle Dropp. "In a poll taken before the shutdown, 42 percent of voters said this issue was important enough to prompt a government shutdown, compared

with 47 percent of voters who say the same today."

Fewer voters, 38 percent, say DACA is not important enough to shut down the government — down from 42 percent immediately before the shutdown.

On the other hand, significantly fewer voters say it's worth shutting down the government to secure funding for Trump's main immigration priority: a wall along the Mexican border. Fewer than 3 in 10 voters, 29 percent, say a border wall is worth shutting down the government over, while 57 percent say the wall isn't worth it.

And most voters identified DACA as the main reason for the shutdown: Sixty-four percent said they thought the shutdown was occurring over DACA, more than identified the border wall (44 percent) as a driving force behind the shutdown.

The deal struck on Monday gives both parties three more weeks to frame their arguments over immigration and government funding. Previous surveys have shown widespread support for allowing DACA recipients to stay in the U.S. — and broad opposition to a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Voters are more likely to say it's

worth shutting down the government to secure increases in defense spending: Fifty-one percent say those increases are worth risking a shutdown, while one-third say they aren't.

The POLITICO/Morning Consult poll surveyed 1,997 registered voters online and has a margin of error of plus or minus 2 percentage points.

*Morning Consult is a nonpartisan media and technology company that provides data-driven research and insights on politics, policy and business strategy.*

## With Dreamer deadline on hold, W.H. stresses deal, not deportation

BY JOSH GERSTEIN

The March 5 deadline that President Donald Trump set for winding down a disputed immigration program continues to add a sense of urgency to the debate about so-called Dreamers, even though a court injunction and the administration's own legal strategy have essentially wiped out the significance of that date.

"We still have until March 5," Juan Escalante of immigrant advocacy group America's Voice said Monday afternoon on CNN, discussing the Obama-era Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program. "Before you know it, we're going to get to March and who knows what kind of deal we have."

At Monday's daily briefing, White House press secretary Sarah Sanders was asked whether Trump would press ahead with plans to deport Dreamers beginning March 5.

Instead of replying that the courts have essentially nullified the importance of that date, she said Trump was pushing for a deal and didn't want to follow through on his plan to end deportation protection for Dreamers.

"We haven't determined that," Sanders said. "We're hopeful that

we don't have to do that and that we don't have to get there."

Last September, the Trump administration told DACA recipients whose quasi-legal status and work permits were set to expire after March 5 that they were essentially out of luck and would be unable to renew their documents.

On Jan. 9, however, a federal judge in San Francisco ordered the administration to resume accepting renewals of DACA status. Many lawyers expected the Justice Department to move immediately to stay the judge's order, but no such move was made. Instead, four days later, the Department of Homeland Security announced that it was again accepting renewal applications, including from people whose status currently expires in March or anytime thereafter.

"It really looks weird," Prof. Stephen Vladeck of the University of Texas School of Law said of the administration's legal stance. "We're in a hurry. We're in a hurry." But, suddenly, on this point, "We're not in any hurry."

Some attorneys closely following the litigation suspect that at least part of the administration's motivation in not seeking an immedi-

ate stay — a move that would have preserved the March 5 date — was to remove urgency that Democrats were using to insist that the fate of the Dreamers was so pressing that it merited blocking government funding.

"Not rushing to stay it does give Congress the breathing room to actually do its job," said Art Arthur of the Center for Immigration Studies, which favors stricter immigration policies. "I think they're deliberately doing it to let it play out."

The Justice Department did ask for what it called "immediate" review of the judge's decision at the Supreme Court, urging the justices to allow the administration to dispense with the usual appeal, in this case to the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

Even if the justices agree to the rare request, however, the case is unlikely to be argued before April and probably wouldn't be decided until June. In the meantime, the window for DACA renewals will remain open, and nearly everyone who has or had permits will be eligible to renew them for two years.

In a filing at the Supreme Court last week, the Trump administration insisted that its decision not to

seek a stay was driven by concern about the consequences of blocking renewals that the court might later allow to resume.

"A primary purpose of the ... orderly wind-down of the DACA policy was to avoid the disruptive effects on all parties of abrupt shifts in the enforcement of the Nation's immigration laws," Solicitor General Noel Francisco wrote. "Inviting more changes before final resolution of this litigation would not further that interest."

Francisco did not invoke the robust debate over DACA underway among members of Congress and between lawmakers and the White House.

However, some of those fighting to preserve the program in the court were not shy in suggesting to the justices that they should butt out for now, in part because of the legislative arm-wrestling over the issue.

"In view of the ongoing discussions between Congress and the President regarding the DACA program, it would be prudent for this Court to avoid intervening earlier than necessary while those discussions proceed," lawyers for the University of California wrote

in a high court filing Monday.

"Adherence to usual procedures for appellate review is especially warranted here, where Congress is now considering legislation that would obviate any need for this Court's intervention," attorneys for six DACA recipients told the justices.

California Attorney General Xavier Becerra is also urging the Supreme Court to pass up review of the case now. That gives Congress more time to work on a legislative solution. But he also noted that it gave Dreamers more time to renew.

"The Trump administration's attempt to move our DACA case directly to the Supreme Court doesn't just buck sound court procedure; it's drastic and unnecessary," Becerra said. "A federal court halted Trump's decision to terminate DACA, based on our argument that his actions were arbitrary and capricious. As a result, any Dreamer whose DACA status has expired can reapply right now."

"We'll keep fighting to preserve this ruling for the hundreds of thousands of Dreamers who have worked so hard to make America better."



# Aides rejoice as Trump stays out of shutdown fray

POTUS let staffers stay on-message

BY ANDREW RESTUCCIA AND NANCY COOK

The shutdown drama taught White House aides a lesson: When it comes to President Donald Trump, sometimes less is more.

For about 48 hours this weekend, Trump kept an unusually low profile, making no public appearances and keeping his direct contact with lawmakers — especially Democrats — to a minimum. Instead, the president left the heavy lifting to his staff, temporarily suppressing his instinct to invite lawmakers to the White House to strike a grand bargain.

The hands-off strategy emerged after Trump met with top White House aides on Friday night. Frustrated with Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, who had been invited in for what ended up being an unproductive meeting earlier in the day, Trump and his team decided to call Democrats' bluff, issuing a statement at 11:58 p.m., declaring that the president "will not negotiate the status of unlawful immigrants while Democrats hold our lawful citizens hostage over their reckless demands." House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) followed suit with similar statements.

For the rest of the weekend, Senate Democrats barely heard a word from Trump's team, leaving them hanging while government agencies closed their doors.

In the end, the stand-back-and-watch approach paid off, putting pressure on Senate leaders to reach an agreement to open the government on their own — and delivering Trump a much-needed victory, according to half a dozen White House officials and advisers.

The approach represented a sharp departure from recent months, when Trump's off-script and sometimes contradictory comments during meetings with lawmakers of both parties — from an hourlong televised meeting with congressional leaders in which the president seemed open to abandoning his own policy positions, to his closed-door comments about not welcoming immigrants from "shit-hole" countries — sent immigration negotiations careening off track.

But White House officials were careful to avoid the perception that they were taking a victory lap too soon. Instead of sending Trump out to the Rose Garden to gloat, as he did after House Republicans passed a bill to repeal Obamacare, aides made a strategic decision to have press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders read a 71-word statement declaring that he's "pleased that Democrats in Congress have come to their senses." Trump took a similarly staid approach to signing the bill reopening the government, with the press office sending out a photograph of him alone at a table in the Treaty Room.

Republicans and Democrats in Congress still have to find a compromise in the next three weeks on immigration to boost border security and protect hundreds of thousands of undocumented immigrants who entered the country



ALEX WONG/GETTY IMAGES

After two weeks of abrupt policy reversals and abortive negotiations with Congress, President Donald Trump remained on the sidelines over the weekend as top aides regained control of the shutdown narrative with a disciplined message campaign.

as minors — and there are already signs the president, who prides himself on his deal-making ability, is eager to reinsert himself into the middle of the negotiations.

One close White House adviser predicted this victory, coupled with the passage of the historic tax bill and the healthy state of the economy, would only embolden Trump to return to his habit of getting directly involved in trying to orchestrate events.

"It's a foregone conclusion he's going to escape," another White House adviser said Monday. "He's like Houdini. If you keep him in a cage, he's going to get out."

Sure enough, Trump posted a celebratory tweet Tuesday morning that sideswiped CNN reporter Jim Acosta, a favorite White House target: "Even Crazy Jim Acosta of Fake News CNN agrees: 'Trump World and WH sources dancing in end zone: Trump wins again... Schumer and Dems caved...gambled and lost.' Thank you for your honesty Jim!"

After the Senate voted to move

position party.

White House aides said the president remained engaged throughout the weekend, even if he wasn't in the Capitol negotiating an end to the shutdown. The president stayed in touch via phone with key Republican lawmakers, including Cornyn, McConnell, Ryan and House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.).

But the president, who made a show earlier this month of hosting senators from both parties at the White House, made a decision not to speak with Democrats once the shutdown started, forgoing further efforts at bipartisan deal-making.

"Since our meeting in the Oval Office on Friday, the president and I have not spoken, and the White House refused to engage in negotiations over the weekend," Schumer said Monday. "The great deal-making president sat on the sidelines."

Asked Monday about the decision to cut out Schumer and the Democrats, Sanders said, "Look, what the president did clearly worked."

**"There is nothing in this bill Democrats say they object to; yet it's like a 2-year-old temper tantrum to say, 'I'm going to take my toys and go home because I'm upset about something else.'"**

— Marc Short, White House legislative director

ahead with ending the shutdown Monday, Trump immediately hosted several Republican senators at the White House, including Majority Whip John Cornyn of Texas and immigration hard-liner Tom Cotton of Arkansas, to discuss what could pass in the Senate. He also met with two Democratic senators, Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Doug Jones of Alabama, breaking his brief silent treatment of the op-

Trump, for his part, spent the weekend calling friends and allies for advice on how to handle the shutdown, the first in his tenure as president, and ask how it was playing in the media.

Worried about polling that showed a large portion of the public blamed Trump and the Republicans for the shutdown, aides mobilized on Friday to shift the blame to Democrats and ensure that the

president didn't become the deft face of the crisis.

For a White House that rarely stays on message, sticking to the same simple talking points and coordinating with congressional Republicans was seen as something of a triumph among West Wing aides and outside advisers, who have long complained about a lack of cohesive messaging.

A senior House aide said the White House learned the importance of message discipline during the tax reform debate, the White House's only major legislative success so far.

The White House kept Trump out of the spotlight almost entirely through the weekend — a feat for a publicity-hungry president — and canceled a public event on school choice at the White House on Monday before it was clear the shutdown would end. Instead, Trump's only public commentary came through a handful of relatively anodyne tweets that stayed on message and avoided the name-calling — "Cryin' Chuck Schumer" or "Dicky Durbin" — that has been a staple of his social media outbursts.

Instead of the president, White House legislative director Marc Short and Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney became the administration's public face of the White House response, so much so that aides took to calling their weekend performances in front of the camera the "Mick and Marc Show."

"There is nothing in this bill Democrats say they object to; yet it's like a 2-year-old temper tantrum to say, 'I'm going to take my toys and go home because I'm upset about something else,'" Short said Saturday. "It has nothing to do with this bill. And Senate Democrats are basically conducting a 2-year-old temper tantrum in front of all of the American people."

Trump, who obsessively watches and grades his aides' appearances on television, was pleased

with Short and Mulvaney, and he praised them on Saturday in Sanders' office, urging his team to "hold the line," according to a White House official.

Behind the scenes, Short, Mulvaney and chief of staff John Kelly represented the White House on Capitol Hill, with Kelly focused on talks with congressional leadership and Short and Mulvaney on wooing rank-and-file members to a deal.

Trump's aides spent the weekend making the case to the president that the shutdown is the Democrats' problem — and emphasizing that it was Senate leaders' job, not his, to fix it.

"They told him, 'The more you're involved, the harder it's going to be to work to negotiate the solution,'" according to an outside adviser close to Trump. "And they told him that the longer the government stays closed, the more likely he is to get blamed."

From the beginning, top administration officials said, they believed that Democrats would move quickly to reopen the government "once they made their point," in the words of a White House aide — though the White House delayed the departure of Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin to Switzerland for the Davos conference until the Senate came to an agreement and even weighed canceling the trip.

The politics of the shutdown became much starker on Monday, when thousands of federal employees were instructed not to come to the office and when the Democrats' insistence to negotiate on immigration as part of a spending bill fell on deaf ears at the White House.

"I'll be honest with you, in my entire career in politics, I have never seen Democrats voluntarily walk themselves into a situation this bad," said Josh Holmes, McConnell's former chief of staff. "The only thing Republicans have to say is, 'Where are your priorities? Are they with American troops and sick poor kids or illegal immigrants?'"



ANDREW HARNIK/AP

**CMS Administrator Seema Verma, a close ally of Vice President Mike Pence, drew headlines when her agency moved to allow states to impose work requirements on some Medicaid recipients. That has been a longheld goal of conservatives, which now begins to chip away at the program that is considered the backbone of Obamacare.**

## Trump gives agency heads leeway to push policies

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"When you have knowledgeable and experienced people who know what they want to do, and are given running room from the White House to do what they want to do, you can get a lot done and get it done quickly," said Tevi Troy, CEO of the American Health Policy Institute and former deputy secretary of Health and Human Services under President George W. Bush.

After Trump's inauguration in 2017, the agencies took time to ramp up. The Trump transition team did not have a government-in-waiting ready on Jan. 20, and the confirmation process also took much longer than in previous administrations, given the hunt for qualified personnel; some nominees' complicated financial portfolios; and the slow pace of confirmation votes in the Senate.

A year later, the policymaking at several agencies is starting to jell, moving at a faster clip than any policy emerging from the White House, according to 10 policy experts, close advisers to the White House and former administration officials.

CMS, which is headed by Seema Verma, a close ally of Vice President Mike Pence, dramatically tweaked Medicaid recently by beginning to allow states to impose work requirements on some recipients — a longheld goal of conservatives that starts to chip away at the program that forms the backbone of Obamacare.

"The notion of instilling work-re-

quirements for Medicaid has long been a conservative policy priority," said Lanhee Chen, a fellow at the Hoover Institution and former policy director for the Romney-Ryan presidential campaign in 2012. "All of this is happening with the blessing of the White House. It illustrates how widespread policy changes might be at the administrative level in the coming years."

A White House spokesman did not respond to a request for comment.

HHS also unveiled a proposed rule to overhaul its civil rights office and offer protection to health workers who do not want to perform services like abortion or to treat transgender patients because of religious or moral reasons.

Over at the EPA, Administrator Scott Pruitt has been aggressively rolling back parts of the Obama era's environmental legacy, including a proposed ban on a pesticide that scientists say adversely affects people's health.

The Education Department, under Secretary Betsy DeVos, rescinded the Obama-era guidance on how schools should handle sexual assault, and the Federal Communications Commission voted to end so-called net neutrality rules that prevented large internet providers like AT&T from slowing internet traffic to some websites. That latter decision now faces a court challenge from 21 states and several public interest groups.

DHS opted to revoke the temporary protected status of 200,000

people from El Salvador who have legally lived and worked in the U.S. following a devastating earthquake in 2001 in that country. Similarly, in November, the Trump administration ended the special immigration status for Haitians. Combined, these moves advance the Trump campaign agenda of getting tougher on immigration.

Meanwhile, Scott Gottlieb at the Food and Drug Administration has accelerated the process to approve generic drugs — even though he has been in his position only since May.

Tally it, and it adds up to a significant, far-reaching portfolio of ways the Trump administration is tweaking the federal government, even though the individual steps are not as dramatic as, say, a huge tax bill.

"Once you get past the Twitter feed and all of the emotional stuff related to the Mueller investigation and the president's outbursts about reporters and foreign countries, it is actually operating like a real administration and starting to get things done," said Jay Lefkowitz, director of Cabinet affairs under President George H.W. Bush and deputy assistant to the president for domestic policy and general counsel of the Office of Management and Budget under President George W. Bush.

In some instances, the president has been more than happy to take credit for what his agency heads are doing. After Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke decided to slash the size of two national monuments in

Utah, the president flew to Utah to tout the move.

"Your timeless bond with the outdoors should not be replaced with the whims of regulators thousands and thousands of miles away," Trump said in his Utah speech.

"I've come to Utah to take a very historic action to reverse federal overreach and restore the rights of this land to your citizens," he later added.

The agencies have taken on an outsize importance in part because Congress has struggled to pass major legislation. But some note that lawmakers' inability to agree on a budget has in some ways held agencies back from making even more radical changes.

That's true at the Department of Labor, where the Trump administration's budget proposed cutting spending by roughly 21 percent — a move that Secretary Alexander Acosta has not yet been able to enact under Congress' temporary funding bills.

"The challenge at a place like the Department of Labor is that significant cuts would have changed direction of the agency, but under some version of a continuing resolution, the Labor Department has not been able to act on those cuts," said Chris Lu, former deputy secretary of Labor and former White House Cabinet secretary to President Barack Obama.

Close advisers to the White House say that 2018 will be the year of deregulation through the

agencies, with Cabinet officials and political appointees receiving guidance from Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs Administrator Neomi Rao and legal assistance of the White House counsel's office.

Since many deregulatory moves will face court challenges that could take years, advisers urge the administration to act quickly so decisions come down by 2020, the next election year.

"Deregulation is one of the Trump administration's highest priorities, so you can expect many of the Cabinet departments and agencies to be launching their own agendas in that area this year," said Leonard Leo, executive vice president of the Federalist Society, a conservative group devoted to limited government. "Expect many of those agencies and departments to be proposing new rules, or proposing to revoke old rules. That is the next step in this deregulatory revolution."

Given the Republicans' one-vote margin in the Senate, it seems unlikely that the White House can notch another big legislative victory along a party-line vote like tax reform, so it forces the administration to turn to seemingly smaller victories.

"In some ways, it happened a little faster than it did under Obama — this move to the pen and a phone," said Troy, about the way the Trump administration will use agencies and executive power to pass its goals. "The recognition has set in sooner about the realities."

# Senators in a stalemate over immigration, border wall

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are anything but simple.

"It won't be easy," said Sen. John Thune of South Dakota, the No. 3 GOP leader. "If it's DACA for border security, that's probably a deal that will get done. If we start adding other elements of the whole immigration debate into it?"

Thune answered his own question: "Narrower gets it done."

Senate Minority Whip Dick Durbin (D-Ill.), a longtime advocate of young undocumented immigrants known as Dreamers, acknowledged: "We're still caught up in this conversation of border security and what is acceptable and what isn't."

Indeed, senators are still largely talking more in terms of process than substance. Just over a dozen senators, led primarily by Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), on Monday began charting out how the group could begin to reach a Dreamers accord.

The list included senators who had already struck the bipartisan immigration deal vehemently opposed by the White House: Durbin and Graham, as well as Sens. Michael Bennet (D-Colo.), Cory Gardner (R-Colo.) and Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.). Among others who attended were Sens. Jon Tester (D-Mont.), Tim Kaine (D-Va.), Angus King (I-Maine), Gary Peters (D-Mich.), Mike Rounds (R-S.D.), James Lankford (R-Okla.), Jerry Moran (R-Kan.) and Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.).

The guest list was confirmed by two people familiar with it.

Graham is trying to persuade Durbin and Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn (R-Texas), the respective party whips, to effectively serve as clearinghouses for immigration ideas from both sides.

"I'm trying to create a process where all this bipartisanship has someplace to go," Graham said. "So if Cornyn and Durbin can work together and receive input, they can give us some idea of whether we can get a deal or what a base bill would look like."

Senators are facing a tight deadline. Government funding expires again after Feb. 8, and McConnell has pledged to bring a bill to the floor so as long as the government stays open. Senior Democrats didn't signal much appetite on Tuesday for another shutdown.

Trump has set March 5 as the official date by which DACA permits will begin expiring en masse, though a court decision this month that partially revived the program effectively pushes back that date indefinitely.

Still, Republicans know that, politically, they need to act on immigration before March — a point they repeatedly stressed to skeptical Democrats during the bipartisan meetings convened during the three-day shutdown.

"We were able to get some assurances to them that we really were going to move to DACA," Rounds said. "We were able to explain to them, it's in our own best interest to get beyond the March 5 issue without having problems because politically, we can't allow DACA not to be addressed."

But beyond agreeing on the need to act, there's little consensus on what to do.

Republicans believed Schumer's



JOHN SHINKLE/POLITICO

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has pledged to take up an immigration bill, but what it would look like is anyone's guess. On Tuesday, Minority Leader Chuck Schumer revealed he yanked his massive earlier offer of \$25 billion in wall funding, a move that angered top Republicans.

offer for billions more in wall funding could have lured more conservative votes to back a broader deal. So when Schumer said Tuesday that he had retracted his offer made to Trump over a cheeseburger summit at the White House, senior Republicans characterized it as a major step backward.

Cornyn said Schumer offered \$25 billion for the barrier. That was more than the \$18 billion over a decade that the White House

ing to see him now retracting his offer because that basically sets the DACA discussion back rather than advancing it."

The administration has also pushed for broader changes to asylum policy and laws governing unaccompanied migrant children. Conservatives argue that's all part of border security, but Democrats and some Republicans say those discussions are too broad.

Still, White House officials have

son (R-Wis.) pointed to proposed changes to the diversity visa lottery. The bipartisan plan would reallocate the visas toward a new merit-based system from under-represented countries, as well as replace visas being terminated with Trump's decision to end Temporary Protected Status for key countries.

Johnson didn't think that was enough. "I think what they're doing to the diversity lottery, it's to some extent, changing the name,"

vately with members of the bipartisan group say they're not doing so because the Graham-Durbin bill is gaining steam. Instead, it's a recognition that bill simply cannot get the votes to pass the Senate.

"They tried to bring a broader group in to say we're going to get 70 votes in the Senate," Lankford said.

But liberals are skeptical about scrapping Graham-Durbin altogether. They worry Republicans will tack on too many conservative immigration proposals to a Dreamers bill that are anathema to the left.

Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto (D-Nev.), the first Latina senator, said that bogging down urgent DACA negotiations with a sweeping GOP bill would mean conservative "comprehensive immigration reform on the backs of Dreamers. That's wrong."

Durbin said all 49 members of the Democratic caucus were "clearly on board" with the deal he hammered out privately with the group of six senators. But liberals are still wary Republicans will drag it to the right.

"Durbin-Graham is not the Democratic proposal," said Sen. Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii). "It was a bipartisan compromise. So this doesn't become the new left pole."

Elana Schor and Nancy Cook contributed to this report.

**"If it's DACA for border security, that's probably a deal that will get done. If we start adding other elements of the whole immigration debate into it? Narrower gets it done."**

— Sen. John Thune

had floated earlier this month, and which Democrats panned. A spokesman for the New York Democrat declined to confirm the figure, but Democrats said Schumer was right to withdraw it because it was part of a broader negotiation that ultimately collapsed.

"It's a substantial number and it's probably in the realm of realistic in terms of what border security improvements are gonna cost," Cornyn said of Schumer's initial offer. "But it's disappoint-

also signaled they would be open to legalizing a broader universe of young immigrants beyond the 690,000 who had held DACA permits when Trump announced he would rescind the program. That moves them closer to what Durbin and Graham had been seeking, but Cornyn said Tuesday "that's a subject of negotiation" and that more would be needed on border security.

Other Republicans say other elements of the bipartisan plan are insufficient. Sen. Ron John-

he said.

Sen. David Perdue of Georgia, a conservative senator close to Trump, dismissed the notion that the bipartisan plan was even a starting point. "It doesn't solve the problem. We'll be right back here in five years," he said.

Said one senior administration official: "It is going to take bringing together multiple factions. It's not just going to be negotiated at the leadership table."

Republicans who are talking pri-

# Despite harassment scandal, Meehan says he will run

MEEHAN from page 1

Meehan, who is married with three children, acknowledged to the Philadelphia Inquirer that his feelings for the woman were progressing "in a way in which I was struggling to make sure that I would never put that into our professional relationship."

Meehan's office also showed the newspaper and other local media outlets a letter the fourth-term Republican wrote to his then-aide on May 4, the day the House voted to repeal Obamacare.

"As I walked this evening and glanced over at the White House I smiled at the irony that on a day that I had to say 'no' to the President and to the Speaker of the House, I got to say 'yes' to you," Meehan wrote the woman.

Meehan is already under investigation by the House Ethics Committee over his conduct toward his former aide, as well as his use of his personal office budget to pay the settlement. He remains a top target for Democrats in the midterm elections, running for reelection in a district that Hillary Clinton won in 2016.

Capitol Hill's Office of Compliance maintains a taxpayer-funded account that lawmakers can presently use to settle harassment claims. But the ethics panel has had no clear guidance on whether personal office budgets may be used, as former Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.) did in 2015, before he was forced to resign last year.

Meehan's comments may open



J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE/AP

Rep. Patrick Meehan (right), shown with Rep Charlie Dent in September, has been requested by House Speaker Paul Ryan to reimburse the House for public funds Meehan used to settle a sexual harassment case.

the door to legal action from his former aide, given that their settlement was subject to a confidentiality agreement. Alexis Ronickher, the attorney representing the former aide, said in an interview Tuesday that her client is weighing whether to respond in court.

"My client continues to want and demand the confidentiality that both parties agreed to," Ronickher said in an interview. "These pub-

lic statements are a gross breach of the agreement. She is exploring her legal options for how to pursue a remedy for this."

Ronickher added that, for now, Meehan's former aide "is seeking to assist the ethics committee in their investigation."

Meehan's office also shared with the Inquirer text messages exchanged with his former aide in which she had offered to help him

"bear the stress and tension." He said that he asked her to ice cream, which he had perceived as an opening to discuss the nature of his feelings for her, and recalled telling her that "I was not interested in a relationship, particularly not any sexual relationship, but we were soul mates."

He described the settlement with the woman as a "severance," according to the Inquirer. Conyers'

settlement with his former aide who alleged harassment was also structured as a severance payment, made confidentially after consultations with the Office of House Employment Counsel.

The former aide pursued a harassment claim against Meehan, first reported Saturday by The New York Times, after she believed he had become jealous of a relationship she began last spring with another man who did not work in the office. Meehan admitted to the Inquirer that he became "rough" on the job with the woman, linking it to the intense political climate that surrounded last year's Obamacare repeal vote.

"Sometimes I have the tendency to lash out to others on the staff," Meehan told the Inquirer, adding that "you go hardest on the ones that you care the most about."

Two Democrats vying for the nomination to challenge Meehan called for his resignation after Saturday's initial news of his harassment settlement. Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) also told Meehan to repay the amount of the taxpayer-funded settlement and announced that the fourth-term Pennsylvanian would leave the Ethics Committee.

Ryan's repayment request to Meehan effectively aligns the House GOP with reforms included in a bipartisan bill to overhaul harassment reporting procedures on the Hill. The House is expected to pass the measure as soon as next week.

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Many House Democrats already oppose a bipartisan immigration proposal from Senate Democratic Whip Dick Durbin (above) and Sen. Lindsey Graham that would protect Dreamers but beef up border security and change the immigration system in ways Democrats call unacceptable.

## Dems' base angry at them, not Republicans

**DEMOCRATS** from page 1

mented immigrants. Ryan has said that Dreamers can “rest easy” but has also stayed noncommittal on his time frame or a vehicle for an immigration vote.

Senate Democratic leaders “employed horrible negotiation tactics in the last week,” Rep. Filemon Vela (D-Texas), a member of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, told POLITICO.

“The path forward [in the House] is very different because it is blatantly clear House Republicans have no intention of putting a bill on the floor giving Dreamers a pathway to citizenship.”

Sen. Chris Coons (D-Del.) acknowledged the tension on Tuesday. “That we did not secure a commitment from Speaker Ryan or get it on a must-pass bill yet, I know is a disappointment to some in the House,” he said in an interview. “But I also don’t think it was realistic ever to think that that was a likely outcome.”

It’s far from clear, however, that the left is prepared to accept Senate Democrats’ version of political reality. Liberals remained up in arms Tuesday, with some activists protesting near Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer’s Brooklyn home base.

“Senate Democrats did not have agency to cut and run on behalf of House Democrats and the grass roots,” Progressive Change Campaign Committee co-founder Adam Green said Tuesday.

A reconciliation can’t come a minute too soon for the party.

The Democratic grass roots has become a potent foe in legislative battles against President Donald Trump. And Democrats hope the

anti-Trump energy that’s been unleashed will serve as a powerful turnout weapon in this year’s midterm elections. A fractured party risks undermining their 2018 prospects and complicating the high-stakes immigration talks.

The bruised feelings among Democrats’ grass-roots allies aren’t shared by all groups, but they had hardly healed on Tuesday. House Democrats also now privately worry that the whole episode has done little more than underscore their irrelevance in the immigration battle.

While House Democrats were struggling to process the deal Schumer accepted Monday — with many venting their frustrations during a private caucus meeting — Senate Democrats were voting overwhelmingly to support the bill to reopen the government. And by the time the short-term spending bill reached the House on Monday afternoon, it was a foregone conclusion Republicans could clear the measure on their own, taking away any leverage House Democrats thought they had in the shutdown fight.

Now some House Democrats say they’re concerned they will be pressured to support whatever bipartisan immigration bill the Senate can pass — even if many disagree with it.

Sen. Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.), who spoke at a rally of fired-up activists on Friday night before voting on Monday to take McConnell’s offer, reminded demoralized activists and House Democrats that their energy would be needed again to help push any immigration deal through the Senate next month.

“Look, I share people’s frustra-

tion, but this was a step forward,” Van Hollen said Tuesday. “It creates a path to getting this done, and now we all need to unite to have a big vote in the Senate.”

Schumer aides met Tuesday with some immigration advocacy groups, signaling that the party and its allies are trying to move forward. And some Democrats who opposed the short-term agreement to reopen the government were also trying to accentuate the positive.

Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.), who joined 15 fellow Democrats in opposing the stopgap spending bill, said Tuesday that it was “certainly an achievement that [McConnell] has made the guarantee of debate on the floor.”

Even so, huge hurdles remain to crafting any immigration package that can make it to the House floor, let alone Trump’s desk. Some liberal groups are warning that their grass-roots members are ready to turn up the pressure on Democrats.

“Generally, those same people who’ve been marching in the streets get angry and lose faith in leadership when they don’t stand up for progressive values,” said Angel Padilla, policy director at the liberal group Indivisible. “Just because you have a Democratic senator doesn’t mean they don’t need some work.”

Significant primary challenges to sitting Democratic senators remain unlikely, but a less enthusiastic base would be deeply damaging in a midterm election that has Congress up for grabs.

One Senate Democratic leadership aide urged activists to train their firepower on Republicans, who control the reins of power, in order to get an immigration deal:

“Rather than attacking each other, we should keep our eye on the ball of getting DACA done.”

Additionally, a large swath of House Democrats, particularly members of the minority caucuses, have already come out against a bipartisan immigration proposal from Durbin and Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.). Their plan would protect Dreamers, but also beef up border security and make changes to family-based migration and the diversity visa system that many House Democrats say is unacceptable.

The White House has come out against the plan, but some senators still hope it will be the primary legislative vehicle in the Senate.

Another concern, House Democrats say, is Schumer proposing to fund the border wall at a meeting with Trump last Friday. Members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus vented about the move during a private meeting Monday afternoon. Schumer said Tuesday he had rescinded the wall offer over the weekend, but some Democrats in the House dismissed that, saying they fully expect Republicans to use it against them in negotiations.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) summed up the mood on Tuesday in observing that the party’s handling of the shutdown battle may not have been “the wisest course of action.”

“And you know, you live, you learn from these things. And we will,” she told reporters. “We will have another opportunity, trust me.”

*Seung Min Kim contributed to this report.*

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#### What the K Street numbers mean

It’s official: The first year of Donald Trump’s presidency was good for K Street. Eighteen of the top 20 lobbying firms in town saw their revenue rise last year, and many saw significant bumps. Covington & Burling, for instance, brought in \$17.8 million in lobbying revenue in 2017 — an increase of more than 40 percent over the \$12.6 million the firm billed in 2016. The American Continental Group, which is home to Dave Urban, who played a critical role in helping Trump win Pennsylvania, saw its revenue spike, too. And Ballard Partners, the Florida lobbying firm run by Brian Ballard, who was a top fundraiser for Trump’s campaign, saw nearly \$10 million in lobbying revenue after setting up shop in Washington last year. (One of the firms that saw a falloff in business was the Podesta Group, which imploded after Tony Podesta stepped down as chairman, but brought in more lobbying revenue than all but eight other firms in the year overall.)

■ Elizabeth Gore, who leads Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck’s government relations department, identified three areas that had driven business during Trump’s first year in office: The battles over repealing Obamacare and reforming the tax code, as well as the surge of nervous companies hiring lobbyists.

#### Jobs report

■ Brooke Sammon has joined Firehouse Strategies as a senior vice president. She was previously media and public relations manager at the American Petroleum Institute.

■ David Rudd has joined Alignment Government Strategies as counsel. He was previously a partner at the Palmetto Group.

■ Scott Widmeyer is now chief strategy officer for Finn Partners in Washington. He is also a founding managing partner for the marketing and communications firm.

■ Josh Black is associate vice president for international advocacy at PhRMA. Prior to that, he was chief of the global issues unit at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations.

■ JP Schnapper-Casteras has started his own law firm, focusing on Supreme Court litigation, progressive causes and technology issues. He was previously special counsel for appellate and Supreme Court advocacy at the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund.

■ Use Ansel, president and CEO of Gables Residential, was elected chairwoman of the National Multifamily Housing Council.

— Theodoric Meyer and Marianne LeVine

# Kurtz: Trump, media are trying to destroy each other

Veteran reporter calls out press in new book

BY MICHAEL CALDERONE

Veteran media reporter and Fox News host Howard Kurtz portrays the news media in a new book as excessively negative in its treatment of President Donald Trump and essentially serving as opposition to the White House.

"Many are misguided in their belief that they are doing the right thing, and myopic in their rationalizations about why it's perfectly fine to treat Trump differently than other presidents," Kurtz writes in "Media Madness: Donald Trump, the Press, and the War over the Truth."

POLITICO read the first several chapters of the book, which conservative publisher Regnery will release on Jan. 29. Though Kurtz does chronicle chaos in the West Wing, as The Washington Post noted in a Sunday night piece on excerpts from the forthcoming book, the author is generally sympathetic toward Trump in terms of his relationship with the media. Presumably, Trump will be much happier with Kurtz's analysis than Michael Wolff's in "Fire and Fury," the bombshell best-seller that depicted Trump as ignorant and incompetent.

"The past two years have radicalized me," Kurtz writes. "I am increasingly troubled by how many of my colleagues have decided to abandon any semblance of fairness out of a conviction that they must save the country from Trump."

Kurtz characterizes the news media as underestimating candidate Trump, and asserts several times that he recognized the insurgent Republican's electoral potential when other pundits dismissed him. "The truths that I wasn't pro-Trump at all, I was pro-reality," he writes.

"It turns out they were the ones who failed to recognize what was unfolding before their eyes," Kurtz writes of the news media. "It was the most catastrophic media failure in a generation."

For nearly three decades, Kurtz worked at The Washington Post and emerged in the 1990s as one of the nation's foremost media chroniclers. He has had several books published — on topics ranging from the rise of talk radio to President Bill Clinton's press shop, to and the network news wars — and had a



RICHARD DREW/AP

The media are "no longer making much attempt to hide their contempt" for the president, argues Howard Kurtz in his book. "Donald Trump is staking his presidency, as he did his election, on nothing less than destroying the credibility of the news media; and the media are determined to do the same to him."

high profile perch as host of CNN's "Reliable Sources." Kurtz left the Post in 2010 for Newsweek and The Daily Beast, where he spent three years, before joining Fox News in 2013 to launch a new Sunday show, "Media Buzz."

In the book, Kurtz writes that he doesn't like either political party and believes "even the best politicians can be self-serving hypocrites." Still, at Fox News, Kurtz's criticism generally falls in line with the right-leaning network's running critique of the news media as clouded by liberal bias and often hostile to conservatives. During the campaign, Kurtz charged the news media with "anti-Trump bias" and last year said anchors had crossed the line in their coverage of the new president.

Last week, Kurtz appeared on Fox News minutes after Sen. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.) finished a memorable floor

speech in which he characterized Trump's "enemy of the people" attack on the media as more befitting a dictator and expressed concerns over a broader assault on truth in America. Kurtz suggested that the retiring senator "apparently plans to spend the rest of his remaining months in office attacking Donald Trump" and had "undermined" his own argument against the president.

While many journalists have expressed alarm over Trump's attempt to vilify and delegitimize the press, Kurtz seems to place equal blame on the news media.

"Donald Trump is staking his presidency, as he did his election, on nothing less than destroying the credibility of the news media; and the media are determined to do the same to him," he writes. Kurtz argues that many news organizations are "no longer making much

attempt to hide their contempt" for the president. And he takes issue with prominent journalists who have publicly characterized Trump as a "racist" based on his words and actions through the years.

In the book, Kurtz writes that Trump complained to him that tweets from New York Times political reporter Jonathan Martin were "just horrible," and Kurtz describes a disputed episode allegedly involving the prominent journalist.

Kurtz writes that Martin had a dispute with a Republican National Committee staffer weeks before the party's July 2016 convention. Martin, by Kurtz's account, told the RNC staffer that Trump is "a racist and a fascist" and that anyone supporting his candidacy was "culpable." After a second episode, Kurtz claims that then-RNC communications director Sean Spicer reported Martin's behavior to a

top Times editor, prompting the reporter to fire back at Spicer in a subsequent call.

Martin disputed Kurtz's account. "Howie paraphrased a vague, posterous-sounding quote to me that I told him sounded ridiculous and not the kind of thing I'd say," Martin told POLITICO. "He couldn't tell me who I purportedly said it to, but said he'd see what more he could tell me and get back to me. I never heard another word from him after that. And I still have no idea what he or Sean Spicer are talking about."

A Regnery spokesperson said the publisher and author "absolutely stand by everything reported in the book."

"That passage is based on sources with direct knowledge of the conversations," a Regnery spokesperson added. "Howie gave Jonathan multiple opportunities to respond, and he declined to comment."



AP FILE PHOTO 2014

Special Inspector General John Sopko issued a report that found credible or potentially credible allegations of child sex abuse by the Afghan military.

## Afghan units implicated in 'gross violations' are still getting Pentagon support, IG finds

BY WESLEY MORGAN

U.S. forces have used a loophole in the law to keep training and equipping units of the Afghan security forces that are implicated in "gross violations of human rights," according to a new report from the Pentagon's independent watchdog.

The Pentagon used the clause to maintain assistance for 12 Afghan units "implicated in 14 gross violations of human rights in 2013," John Sopko, the special inspector general for Afghanistan

reconstruction, found in the report, released Tuesday.

Normally, units with records of human rights abuses would have their assistance withheld under the Pentagon's version of the so-called Leahy Law.

But the IG describes how, under the so-called notwithstanding clause in the appropriations act that funds security assistance in Afghanistan, the Pentagon can forgo the mandate when it is deemed "infeasible."

Of a larger total of 75 reported

gross human rights violations brought to light as of August 2016, six were found to involve credible or potentially credible allegations of child sex abuse. The report cautions, however, that "the full extent of child sexual assault committed by Afghan security forces may never be known."

The IG's investigation was prompted by allegations, first reported by The New York Times in 2015, that sexual abuse of children by members of the Afghan military and police was "rampant."

# Trump's energy juggernaut faces daunting Year 2

Legal, market factors could affect agenda

BY BEN LEFEBVRE

President Donald Trump has resurrected the Keystone XL pipeline, renounced the Paris climate agreement, opened a long-disputed Alaska refuge to oil drilling and ordered his agencies to erase Obama-era regulations on the petroleum, coal and power industries — all in the name of asserting U.S. “energy dominance.”

But from here on, his victories will be more difficult to achieve.

Reversing Barack Obama's environmental and energy agenda is one of the Trump administration's big first-year successes, along with achievements like the \$1.5 trillion tax overhaul. It has certainly been one of Trump's most persistent strategies, as his agencies have moved to revoke Obama-era climate and water regulations, ease limits on fracking, wipe out drilling restrictions on almost the entire U.S. coastline and postpone energy-efficiency requirements.

Now, however, the courts will have their say in how far these rollbacks go, as much of Trump's deregulatory agenda faces legal challenges from state attorneys general and environmental groups from D.C. to California.

More seriously, the parts of Trump's agenda that survive may not have the deep impact that he has been promising especially as the nation moves into the second decade of a boom that has already made the U.S. the world's biggest oil and gas producer, and as market forces continue to take a bite out of coal.

“We already seem to have more oil than we can say grace over,” said John Northington, a Clinton-era Interior Department official now working as an energy consultant. “I don't think the new policies will have any impact on the market. A lot of the rule-making they've proposed will be held up in courts or overturned.”

Even so, industry groups that chafed under the Obama-era regulations say they're pleased with what Trump has achieved so far.

“We were excited by what we saw in 2017,” said Dan Naatz, senior vice president of government relations and political affairs at the Independent Petroleum Association of America. “The administration got off to a strong start in reshaping and rebalancing American energy development. It was a look at putting in thoughtful policies, in contrast to the challenges we faced in the Obama administration.”

So far, Trump's most concrete impact on energy policy came when he approved the Keystone XL pipeline and ordered a speedy environmental review of the Dakota Access pipeline, both of which had languished under the Obama administration. The Dakota pipeline started transporting oil in June, less than half a year after Trump signed an executive order, but it's not clear whether the Keystone XL pipeline will ever be built, despite Trump's comments suggesting it already is operating.

Keystone developer TransCanada said just last week that it believes it has secured adequate



President Donald Trump and Energy Secretary Rick Perry may find it more difficult to accomplish the administration's energy agenda, especially as market forces continue to take a bite out of coal.

NICHOLAS KAMM/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

demand for the Canada-to-Texas oil pipeline — after garnering a significant commitment for oil shipments from customers including the Alberta government — but it hasn't said for sure that it will build the \$8 billion project. The company is also still negotiating with Nebraska landowners on the route that the state's regulator approved. Meanwhile, environmental groups are challeng-

ing Trump's approval process in court, saying the administration didn't follow proper procedure.

The Interior Department also has begun the repeal process on Obama-era rules that had forced oil and gas companies to tamp down on methane emission and disclose the chemicals they use to frack wells on federal land. But those rollbacks, lauded by the industry, are also being contested in court.

“It was a concentrated attempt to reverse the gains we made in the past 40 years,” Sierra Club Legislative Director Melinda Pierce said. “It takes so long to put a rule in place, and it takes the same administrative process to unwind, so it's slow. So the immediate impact to public health and the environment are down the road and certain to be challenged in court.”

Meanwhile, the GOP's mam-

moth tax bill cleared the way for the Interior Department to sell drilling leases in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, fulfilling a decades-old goal of the oil and gas industry.

But the administration's penchant to cut corners has imperiled what should have been another energy win: its proposal this month to open up nearly 100 percent of federal waters to new offshore drilling. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke did a quick about-face when Florida's elected officials objected to the possibility of oil drilling off its coast. Zinke's Twitter announcement that he would remove the state from his plan galvanized lawmakers and governors from other coastal states who were already wary of how drilling rigs off their beaches might harm their tourism and fishing economies.

Governors from both political parties have pressed Zinke to rethink his offshore drilling move. And his reversal on Florida drilling, which came before Interior had gone through a public comment period, could put the whole draft proposal in court over alleged violations of the Administrative Procedure Act.

Meanwhile, even with oil prices on the rise, oil companies appeared to have little appetite to pour billions of dollars into new drilling projects in Alaska or off the Atlantic and Pacific coasts when onshore fields opened up by fracking remain cheap.

“A lot of the stuff coming out of Interior is just PR,” said Pavel Molchanov, an energy analyst with financial services firm Raymond James in Houston. “It doesn't mean anything to drilling. Drilling off the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, it's pure fantasy to think we'll see that.”

On coal, Trump's promises to revive the industry have received praise from backers like Murray Energy founder Bob Murray, who had complained that during the Obama administration, the Environmental Protection Agency's climate regulations for power plants unfairly targeted them. While EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt has begun to rescind that rule and the Interior Department has lifted a moratorium on coal leases on federal land, experts see little chance coal will reverse the sharp declines it has suffered in the past decade.

A last-ditch effort by the Energy Department to throw the coal industry a lifeline fell flat earlier this month when the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission — a panel dominated by Trump appointees — rejected Secretary Rick Perry's plan to offer financial support to coal-fired power plants. The DOE plan had drawn sharp criticism after photos of Murray delivering a plan to protect coal emerged.

U.S. coal production did rise in 2017, boosted by exports of steel-making coal. But demand is expected to drop this year as natural gas continues to take its share of the electricity market.

“If natural gas prices drop, the pace of U.S. coal decline will accelerate,” Rhodium Group energy analyst Trevor Houser said. “This minirecovery in coal production in 2017, the bottom will fall out from that.”



What's really driving politics with Isaac Dove

## Perkins: President gets 'mulligan' on life, porn star

Evangelicals support Trump, warts and all

**BY EDWARD-ISAAC DOVERE**  
Donald Trump is still the answer to many conservative evangelical leaders' prayers. Or at least to their continuing grievances.

They embrace Trump the policymaker, despite being uneasy about Trump as a man, says Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council, a prominent evangelical activist group.

Perkins knows about Stormy Daniels, the porn actress who claimed, in a 2011 interview, that in 2006 she had sex with Trump four months after his wife, Melania, gave birth to their son, Barron. He knows of the reports that Daniels (real name: Stephanie Clifford) was paid off to keep the affair quiet in the waning weeks of the 2016 election. He knows about the cursing, the lewdness and the litany of questionable behavior over the past year of Trump's life or the 70 that came before it.

"We kind of gave him — 'All right, you get a mulligan. You get a do-over here,'" Perkins told me in an interview for the latest episode of POLITICO's Off Message podcast.

Weigh a paid-off porn star against being the first president to address the March for Life live via video feed, and a lot of evangelical leaders insist they can still walk away happy.

Evangelical Christians, says Perkins, "were tired of being kicked around by Barack Obama and his leftists. And I think they are finally glad that there's somebody on the playground that is willing to punch the bully."

What happened to turning the other cheek? I ask.

"You know, you only have two cheeks," Perkins says. "Look, Christianity is not all about being a welcome mat which people can just stomp their feet on."

• • •

In all the clashes between principles and power over the past two years, conservative evangelicals can seem to have made one of the biggest and more confusing trade-offs — at least to outside observers. After all, they say the roots of their beliefs go far deeper than partisan concerns.

During the primaries, evangelicals turned out in numbers that surprised everyone, and more than 80 percent stayed with Trump in the general election against Hillary Clinton, even after the "Access Hollywood" tape and everything else during the campaign. But their support is starting to waver: According to a Pew poll out in December, Trump's support has dropped sharply among white evangelical Protestants, from 78 percent in February to 61 percent in December, as his approval ratings among the overall electorate has settled in the



ZACK STANTON/POLITICO

Evangelical Christians, says Tony Perkins, "were tired of being kicked around by Barack Obama and his leftists. And I think they are finally glad that there's somebody on the playground that is willing to punch the bully."

mid-30s.

Perkins — who started out the 2016 race as a strong supporter of Sen. Ted Cruz — has been a frequent visitor to the Oval Office. He's prayed with Trump. He says he's seen the president grow, including in his sense of faith.

What might look like hypocrisy, Perkins says, is actually attention to detail.

Perkins cheers the White House's restrictive posture toward abortion rights and its "religious freedom" executive orders (which critics allege are part of a thinly veiled attempt to legalize discrimination against LGBTQ Americans). He says his only gripe with the administration is that Secretary of State Rex Tillerson is not doing enough to stop abortions and liberal activism around the world. "We're seeing Soros dollars being connected with USAID funds, and they're creating these pro-abortion, pro-communist groups in some cases, working to take down conservative governments," Perkins says.

important to him, and I think in this transaction, he realizes, 'Hey, these are people I can count on, because they don't blow with the political winds,'" he says. "It's a developing relationship, but I'll have to say this: From a policy standpoint, he has delivered more than any other president in my lifetime."

Later, Perkins adds, "I think the president is providing the leadership we need at this time, in our country and in our culture."

As a moral leader? I ask.  
"As a leader," Perkins replies. Perkins isn't the only one pushing this rationalization. "Our country's got a sin problem," the Rev. Franklin Graham told MSNBC host Alex Witt in an interview on Saturday. Graham, son of the Rev. Billy Graham and current president of his Evangelistic Association, said he saw no reason to believe the allegations about Trump and Stormy Daniels, nor the reports that the president called certain countries "shitholes," despite the fact Trump reportedly bragged about saying it in private

a concern for Christian values, he does have a concern to protect Christians — whether it's here at home or around the world — and I appreciate the fact that he protects religious liberty and freedom."

Plus, there's Vice President Mike Pence, an evangelical himself and the constant reassurance many evangelical leaders cite, who while traveling in Israel on Monday said he wouldn't talk about the "latest baseless allegations" in the Stormy Daniels confessional.

Many evangelical leaders have struggled with Trump's position on immigration, including several on his own advisory council. Last week, after a meeting with House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), several religious leaders joined her and other Democrats for a news conference pressing Trump to protect the Dreamers.

"To those members of Congress committed to life: It doesn't finish when the baby is born," said National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference President Samuel Rodriguez,

the 'OTMs' — the 'other than Mexicans' — that are crossing the borders, who are coming from Islamic countries that are coming into this country to do harm to this nation."

A father of five, including a 10-year-old son, Perkins says the president has posed a challenge in what to tell his children. None of them like all the tweeting, and Perkins says he'd change that if he could, though he understands it.

"These things that are said about him bother him, and he is one of those people, like most people, looking for acceptance, not rejection. That's why his reference to the polls and stuff like that, and so when someone on TV, a talking head is saying things about him, his natural reaction is to respond, and I think that's what he's done with Twitter," Perkins says. "And so, in terms of my family, my kids growing up in a Christian home, and as we talk about these things, there's an understanding that he has a need, and he wants to be accepted, and these things that are said are hurtful."

Is that forgiving attitude in keeping with conservative Christian teachings?

"We see right and wrong. We see good and evil, but also among evangelicals, there's an understanding that we are all fallen, and the idea of forgiveness is very prominent," Perkins says. "And so, we understand that, yes, there is justice, but there is mercy."

Mercury in politics can be harder to find.

Perkins recalls the day in July 2015, at a religious forum in Iowa, when Trump snapped back at John McCain's criticism by saying he didn't consider the Arizona senator and former POW a war hero. Perkins, who was waiting to go on stage following Trump, figured that those remarks alone would end Trump's candidacy. What he underestimated, Perkins says, was the anger at McCain, whom he considers a friend, but who's "been extremely disappointing politically" to evangelicals for years.

The evangelical reaction, according to Perkins, was "Look, I agree with [Trump]. I can't stand John McCain.' I think that's what people were connecting with."

He acknowledged that doesn't seem very Christian, "but again, I think this president, in his authenticity, is what has connected with people."

As long as Trump doesn't disappoint evangelicals politically, Perkins predicts, they'll stick with him. "Whenever the policy stops, and his administration reverts to just personality," he adds, "that's where I believe the president will be in trouble."

To subscribe to POLITICO's "Off Message" podcast with Isaac Dove, search for "Off Message" in your favorite podcast app.

**"It's a developing relationship, but I'll have to say this: From a policy standpoint, he has delivered more than any other president in my lifetime."**

— Tony Perkins, President, Family Research Council

According to Perkins, evangelical leaders have no illusions about the nature of their relationship with Trump. "I don't think this president is using evangelicals. ... I think he genuinely enjoys the relationship that has developed. He has found, I think — and he's a very transactional president. Trust is important to him. Loyalty is

phone calls. Graham deflected questions about whether he was holding Trump to a different personal standard than he might for a politician he disagreed with more.

"We certainly don't hold him up as the pastor of this country, and he's not," Graham told the network. "But I appreciate the fact that the president does have

who was one of the speakers at Trump's inauguration. "Womb to tomb."

Though Trump kicked off his campaign by railing against Mexican immigrants as criminals and rapists, Perkins says, "It's not — a lot of people think, 'Well, they don't want Mexicans down here; they don't want people from south.' That's not what it is. It's



## OPINION



ADAM BERRY/GETTY IMAGES

The first Women's March electrified the press, but it was unrealistic to expect the 2018 version — which included this activist in Berlin — to land the same punch, Jack Shafer writes.

## Why the press didn't cover your demonstration

BY JACK SHAFER

An activist can have plenty of reasons to summon his faithful to march in a demonstration. He might call the gathering to petition the government for a redress of grievances. He might want to advertise the size of his community. He might do it to build a cadre for the future. But the true aim of the organizers is to attract media attention.

By this measure, the weekend Women's March, held in multiple cities, did OK, attracting numerous and sizable stories in *The New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and the *Los Angeles Times* and on cable TV. But the 2018 coverage did not match that given the 2017 Women's March, leading some to complain that the press had deliberately marginalized their protest.

Feminist marchers aren't the only ones to lament low coverage of their demonstration. The conservative Media Research Center grouched that ABC, CBS and NBC unfairly allotted three times as much news coverage to the Women's March on the first evening of coverage as they did to the March for Life in Washington, staged last Friday. The March for Life attracted an estimated 50,000 to 100,000 bodies to D.C., while the Women's March gathered about 10,000. Where's our coverage, cried the March for Life!

Setting aside these dueling complaints for a moment, why do the media slather more coverage on some demonstrations and less on others? The easy — and usually wrong — answer to the question about why the media do what they do settles on "liberal media bias." But liberal media bias doesn't go very far

in explaining why a "liberal" event like the Women's March 2018 received less coverage than Women's March 2017.

For the answer, we must explore the newsroom mindset. Scratch a journalist and he'll dismiss marches and demonstrations as boring pseudo-events that are about as exciting to cover as a slow-melting glacier. Some reporters resent covering such preplanned events — they feel no obligation to be your publicist. But ink and

March 2018 to recycle the hat and the slogans from last year, it was unrealistic to expect this year's demo would land the same punch. The addition of #MeToo to the agenda wasn't enough to refresh it.

### Make your second demo bigger than the first

Journalists are suckers for momentum. If this year's demo is smaller than last year's demo, it will garner less attention. The Women's March 2018

highest regard for things that happen where they live — New York and Washington. By New York standards, 100,000 ain't that many. Never count on the national media to come to you: You've got to come to the national media if you want press.

### Beware media competition

No matter how big or original your demonstration, it's competing with other news events for headlines. When other news intrudes, as it did this

Violence may engender deep coverage but not the kind you want.)

### A final note: Keep it simple

Refine your demonstration to its essence as the press gets confused when offered too many storylines. The 1963 March on Washington focused on civil rights. The anti-war protests of the 1960s and 1970s called mostly for an end to the Vietnam War. LGBTQ marches on Washington in recent decades were about gay rights. The official Women's March 2017 agenda ranged wide and far, including not only women's rights but the intersectionality of immigrant rights, "environmental justice," disability rights, worker's rights, reproductive rights and a call to "end violence." I assume many of today's protesters support the whole program, but my sense of 2017 rallygoers in Washington was that they were attending the march in defiance of Donald Trump, inaugurated the day before. Can the same be said of this year's protesters? As bad as Trump is, he's not the same unifying boogeyman he was a year ago.

I fear that no amount of advice will help the Women's March expand its 2017 mind-share. Maybe the group will become a victim of diminishing returns, like so many other protest organizations, and will become like the March for Life — an annual reunion of the faithful that doesn't make much of a political difference but makes its participants feel good. Not that there's anything wrong with that — as long as the organizers don't depend on the press for coverage.

Jack Shafer is POLITICO Magazine's senior media writer.

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airtime can be yours if you follow the basic guidelines for attracting coverage that I've observed over a lifetime of consuming news stories about marches and demos (and sometimes even assigning or writing pieces about them!).

### Reporters delight in the novel

The reiteration of almost anything — a second Transformers movie, another President Bush, the New England Patriots in the Super Bowl — tends to dull the average journalist's enthusiasm. One reason the March for Life doesn't get a media pop is that it gathers annually, making it as predictable a story as the return of the swallows to Capistrano. The first Women's March electrified the press because few reporters had witnessed such a gargantuan demo in Washington. Also, none had ever seen a pussy hat before. While it was fine for the Women's

organizers have an excuse for a smaller Washington demo: They deliberately downsized from the 500,000-plus participants of 2017 to 10,000, redirecting organizational efforts to Las Vegas, where the accent was on ending Republican control of Congress and the states. That might be fine for the movement's long-term goals, but smaller crowds almost always translate into less news coverage.

### Concentrate on New York and Washington

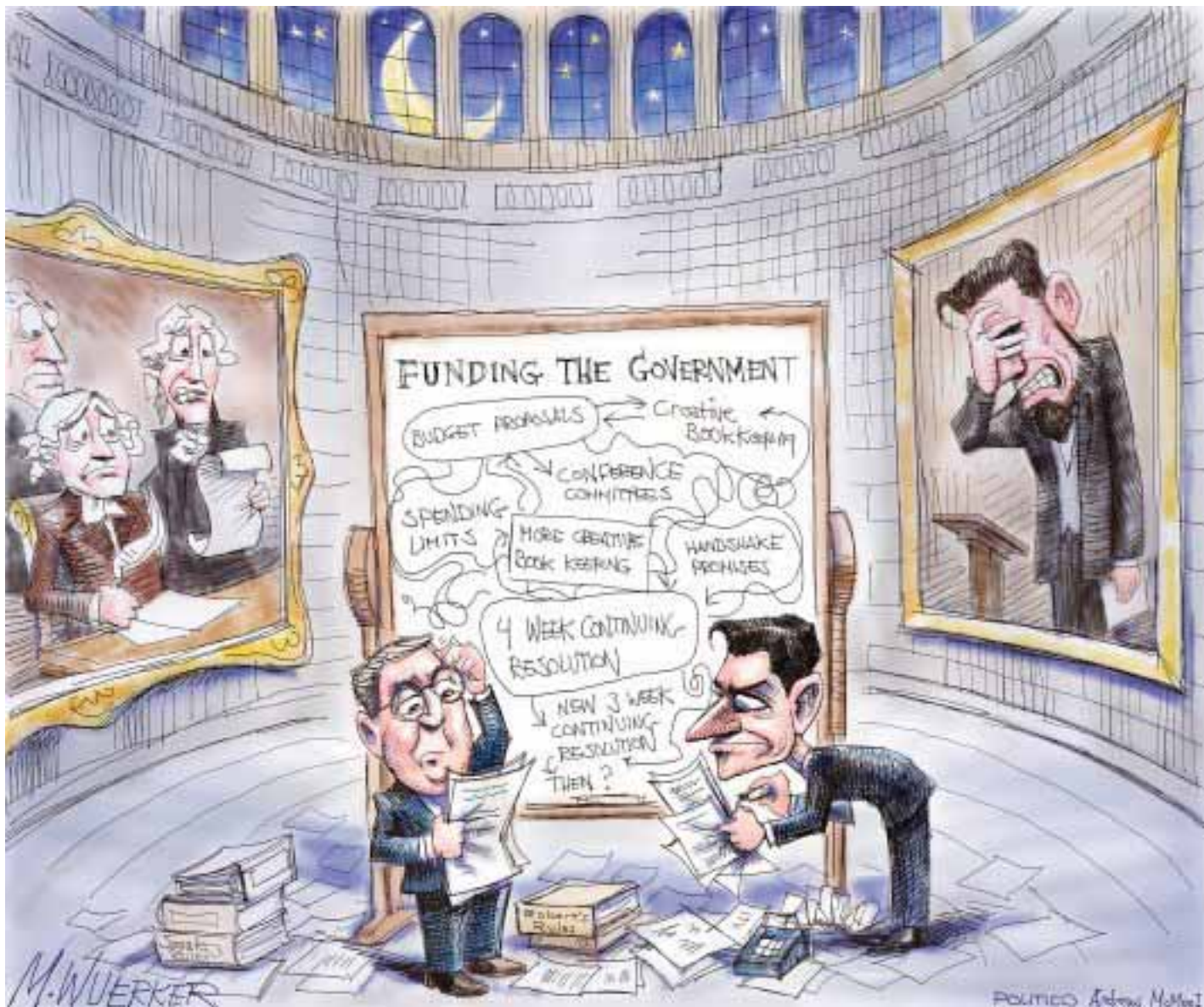
The Women's March 2018 attracted millions across the country this year, with estimated crowds of 100,000 to 200,000 in New York, 250,000 to 300,000 in Chicago, and 300,000 to 600,000 in Los Angeles. The aggregate numbers amazed, but they did not translate into boffo news coverage because the national press maintains its

weekend when the government staged its shutdown, your audience appeal will decline. If possible, never schedule your demo against other big news. (FiveThirtyEight's Nate Silver thought the march was bigger news than the shutdown, but he is decidedly in the media minority.)

### A little violence goes a long way

The Women's March 2018 was exceedingly civil. As a peaceful soul, I would never advocate violence by demonstrators or the destruction of property, but I would also alert activists to the truth that the press loves the sounds of breaking glass, police-car sirens and tear-gas grenades. Remember how they delighted in the mayhem of the 1999 World Trade Organization riots in Seattle and the burning cars following the Trump inauguration? (Warning:

MATT WUERKER

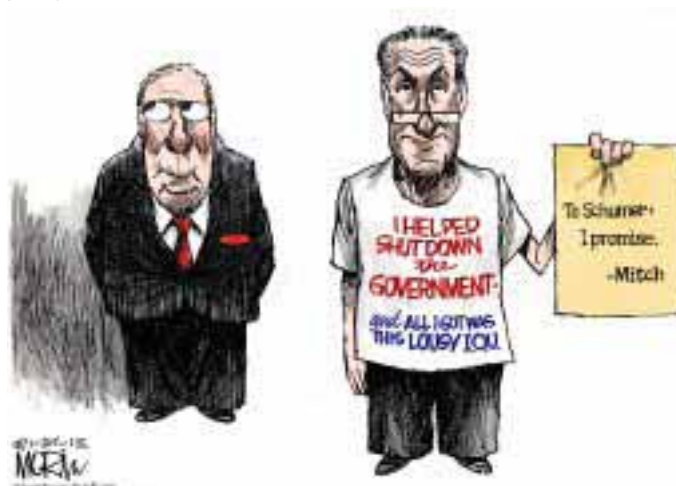


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