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Subject: Vice Presidential News Clips for Friday, May 16, 2014

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TO: THE VICE PRESIDENT AND STAFF

DATE: FRIDAY, MAY 16, 2014 -- 6:15 AM EDT

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- + Obamas' Assets Worth Between \$1.8 Million And \$7 Million, Financial Forms Show (MCT)
- + Obama's Assets Estimated At \$2 Million To \$7 Million (USAT)
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- + If You're Reading This, You Did Not Buy Joe Biden's Book (CALLER)
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- + A Once-A-Day Pill To Prevent AIDS (NYT)
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- + Force-Feedings At Guantánamo (NYT)
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- + AstraZeneca And JP Morgan Close \$44M Property Deal (WILNJ)
- + Task Force Pitches Proposal To Cut Workers' Comp Costs (WILNJ)
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- + Sussex County Needs Leadership, Not Jokes About Race (WILNJ)
 - + Sixty Years After Brown And Still A Long Way To Go (WILNJ)
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BIDEN IN THE NEWS:

BIDEN CAUTIONS CHINA IN ITS DISPUTE WITH VIETNAM (AP)

Associated Press, May 16, 2014

WASHINGTON - Vice President Joe Biden is conveying America's objections about China's behavior in a territorial dispute with Vietnam to the top brass of the Chinese military. Biden met Thursday with Fang Fenghui, the military's general chief of staff. The White House says Biden told Fang the U.S. was seriously concerned about China's unilateral actions. Biden told Fang the U.S. doesn't take a side in the territorial confrontation between the two countries over an area in the South China Sea. That's where China has triggered protests in Vietnam by deploying an oil rig in the long-disputed seas. One person has been killed, a Chinese worker in Vietnam.

But Biden says no nation should take provocative steps in the conflict that undermine stability and peace.

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BIDEN REFINANCES MORTGAGE BUT OBAMA STANDS PAT (WSJ)

By Jeffrey Sparshott

Wall Street Journal, May 16, 2014

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

OBAMAS HAD UP TO \$7 MILLION IN ASSETS IN '13, RECORDS SHOW (NYT)

By Jada F. Smith

New York Times, May 16, 2014

The assets of President Obama and his wife, Michelle, were valued as high as \$7 million last year, according to a financial disclosure form released by the White House on Thursday.

Most of the president's income came from royalties on his three books and investments made possible by the proceeds. His memoir, "Dreams From My Father," published in 1995, continued to make the most money for Mr. Obama, generating between \$50,001 and \$100,000 in royalties, according to the disclosure form. "The Audacity of Hope," from 2006, earned between \$15,001 and \$50,000, and "Of Thee I Sing: A Letter to My Daughters," released in 2010, earned between \$5,001 and \$15,000.

Sales from Mr. Obama's books have decreased steadily every year since he took office as president, according to the disclosure forms the White House has released.

Treasury notes held jointly by the president and Mrs. Obama are their most valuable assets, worth between \$1 million and \$5 million. The forms only require the Obamas to list their assets and income in wide ranges, leaving it difficult to discern the exact amount of the couple's worth in 2013. Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr.'s publishing career earned him considerably less than the president's totals. "Promises to Keep," released in 2007, earned less than \$201 in royalties last year, according to Mr. Biden's financial disclosure form, also released on Thursday.

The Obamas' 2013 tax returns, released in April, showed they paid \$98,169 in federal taxes on \$481,098 in adjusted gross income. The Bidens paid \$96,378 in taxes on an adjusted gross income of \$407,009.

The Obama administration was the first to publish financial disclosure reports online. High-ranking government officials have been required to release their financial information since passage of the Ethics in Government Act of 1978.

"Neither the president nor the vice president have any conflicts of interest, and their reports have been reviewed and certified by the independent Office of Government Ethics," Jay Carney, the White House press secretary, said in a statement. "We are continuing this administration's practice of posting these forms online here in the interests of transparency."

OBAMAS' ASSETS WORTH BETWEEN \$1.8 MILLION AND \$7 MILLION, FINANCIAL FORMS SHOW (MCT)

By Lindsay Wise

McClatchy, May 16, 2014

WASHINGTON - President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama held assets worth between \$1.8 million and \$7 million last year, including between \$1 million and \$5 million in U.S. treasury notes, according to financial disclosure forms released by the White House on Thursday. The treasury notes were the First Family's largest single asset in 2013, but the Obamas also reported between \$70,000 and \$165,000 in income from book royalties, up to \$250,000 in a Vanguard retirement fund, and between \$200,000 and \$400,000 in college savings plans. The disclosure forms show that the Obamas still owe between \$500,000 and \$1 million on a 30 year mortgage for their home in Chicago, Illinois, with an interest rate of more than 5.6 percent. The couple does not appear to have refinanced since 2005.

Federal law requires the president, vice president and other high-level officials to submit their finances annually for review by the Office of Government Ethics. The forms list assets in ranges of hundreds of thousands of dollars, not exact amounts.

Ethics officials did not find any conflicts of interest in the 2013 reports submitted by Obama or Vice President Joe Biden, the White House said.

OBAMA'S ASSETS ESTIMATED AT \$2 MILLION TO \$7 MILLION (USAT)

By David Jackson

USA Today, May 16, 2014

President Obama and first lady Michelle Obama listed assets valued at about \$2 million to \$7 million, according to a financial disclosure report released Thursday.

Vice President Biden also filed his annual financial disclosure statement and listed assets valued at \$276,000 to \$940,000, including a rental property owned jointly with his wife, Jill.

"The Ethics in Government Act of 1978 requires high-level federal officials to publicly disclose their personal financial interests," said a White House blog post by spokesman Jay Carney. "The public filing system serves to prevent financial conflicts of interest by providing for a systematic review of

the finances of government officials."

Presidents and other officeholders are required to list assets, but the form provides wide ranges on the values of those assets.

In declaring "U.S. Treasury notes," Obama checked the box valuing them at \$1,000,001 to \$5 million.

In addition to various bank accounts, index funds and college savings plans, Obama declared royalties from his books *Dreams From My Father*, *The Audacity of Hope* and *Of Thee I Sing: A Letter To My Daughters*.

The asset ranges added up to \$1.95 million to \$7.15 million for the president.

The Obamas listed only one liability, the mortgage on their home in Chicago.

OBAMAS LIST ASSETS BETWEEN \$1.8M AND \$7M (AP)

By

Associated Press, May 16, 2014

President Barack Obama and first lady Michelle Obama reported assets worth between \$1.8 million and \$7 million for last year, little changed from their previous year's holdings, according to financial disclosure forms released Thursday.

The forms, required by law, permit public officials to list their assets in broad ranges. As a result, a precise net worth is difficult to ascertain.

The forms show the largest jointly owned assets by the president and the first lady were Treasury notes worth between \$1 million and \$5 million. While the value of their assets is certainly higher than that of most Americans, their mix reflects the financial demands of a 50-something couple with two daughters. Their assets include Vanguard retirement funds and college savings plans. Royalties in 2013 from Obama's books, "*Dreams From My Father*," "*The Audacity of Hope*" and "*Of Thee I Sing*," totaled between \$70,000 and \$165,000. In 2011, they totaled between \$250,000 and \$2.1 million.

The Obamas also have a 30-year mortgage on their Chicago home worth between \$500,000 and \$1 million with an interest rate of 5.625 percent.

Vice President Joe Biden reported 2013 assets of between \$276,000 and \$940,000, including a rental property owned jointly with his wife, Jill, in Wilmington, Delaware.

Unlike the Obamas, Biden has taken advantage of lower mortgage rates and refinanced his mortgage last year. He listed a 30-year mortgage on his principal residence and his rental property worth between \$500,000 and \$1 million with an interest rate of 3.375 percent.

Biden also reported making \$25,000 donations to each of two Pennsylvania anti-domestic violence groups. The \$50,000 came from an award Biden received from the Pennsylvania Society, which honored Biden last year with its gold medal for distinguished achievement.

Last month, the Obamas released their 2013 tax returns and reported paying \$98,169 in taxes on \$481,098 in adjusted income.

The Bidens reported paying \$96,378 in federal taxes last year on adjusted gross income of \$407,009.

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AS AUTHOR, BIDEN DISTANT SECOND TO OBAMA (WT)

'Promises to Keep' '13 royalties under \$201

By Ben Wolfgang

Washington Times, May 16, 2014

Vice President Joseph R. Biden's success as an author pales in comparison to that of his boss, according to financial records released Thursday by the White House.

Financial disclosure reports for both Mr. Biden and President Obama, required by law each year, detail the investments and outside income for both men.

The documents show Mr. Obama continues to enjoy royalties from his three books. "*Dreams From My Father*" generated between \$50,001 and \$100,000 for the president last year, while "*The Audacity of Hope*" pulled in between \$15,001 and \$50,000, according to the records.

The president's other work, "*Of Thee I Sing: A Letter To My Daughters*," brought in between \$5,001 and \$15,000 in royalties.

By contrast, Mr. Biden made less than \$201 last year from his memoir, "Promises To Keep," the records show.

The president, vice president and other high-ranking government officials are required to submit the reports each year under the 1978 Ethics in Government Act. The act is meant to ensure no officials have financial conflicts of interest.

"Neither the president nor the vice president has any conflicts of interest, and their reports have been reviewed and certified by the independent Office of Government Ethics," White House press secretary Jay Carney said Thursday. "We are continuing this administration's practice of posting these forms online here in the interests of transparency."

The full Obama and Biden reports are available online.

OBAMA LISTS ASSETS WORTH UP TO \$7.15 MLN (REU)

Reuters, May 16, 2014

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

BIDEN REFINANCES, GETS SUPER-LOW MORTGAGE RATES (CQRC)

Roll Call, May 16, 2014

Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. refinanced his home and two home equity lines of credit in 2013, securing super-low mortgage rates that will save him thousands of dollars a year.

Biden was generally been among the poorer senators, but his family finances appear to have improved of late, judging by a review of his financial disclosure forms.

In 2013, he paid off a mortgage on his Delaware home with a 4.625 percent interest rate with a new, 30-year mortgage with a super-low 3.375 percent rate from TD Bank, which has a Canadian parent company.

The mortgage is somewhere between \$500,000 and \$1 million, and includes a rental property. Saving 1.25 percent on \$500,000 would amount to more than \$6,000 in savings a year, although after-tax savings would be less because of the mortgage interest deduction.

He also paid off two home equity lines of credit each worth more than \$100,000 and took out a new home equity line of credit worth more than \$250,000.

The old home equity lines featured interest rates of 4.49 percent and a prime interest rate, respectively.

The new home equity line features a super-low 2.75 percent interest rate and a 20-year term, also from TD Bank. That should save Biden thousands more each year.

Biden, 71, would be more than 100 years old when the 30-year mortgage is paid off, if it isn't paid off early.

Obama, meanwhile, continues to pay above-market interest rates on his mortgage on his Chicago home - 5.625 percent. We noted a few years back that while Obama had urged a massive refinancing program to bolster the economy, he hadn't yet taken advantage of low interest rates to refinance himself.

OBAMAS DIVERGE WITH BIDENS ON MORTGAGE REFINANCING (BLOOM)

By Mike Dorning

Bloomberg News, May 16, 2014

President Barack Obama, who has encouraged homeowners to refinance their mortgages to take advantage of lower interest rates, hasn't taken his own advice.

Obama, 52, and first lady Michelle Obama, 50, are still making payments on the same mortgage they took out when they purchased their Chicago residence in 2005 at an interest rate of 5.625 percent, according to a disclosure form released today. The form also showed little change in the family's finances from last year.

Vice President Joe Biden didn't pass up the mortgage opportunity, refinancing the debt on his Wilmington, Delaware, home at a 3.375 percent interest rate, according to his disclosure form.

The average rate offered on typical 30-year mortgages fell to a six-month low of 4.2 percent this week from a 2013 high of 4.58 percent in August, according to Freddie Mac surveys. Borrowing costs are up from a record low 3.31 percent in November 2012.

White House spokesman Bobby Whitehouse declined to comment on the president's mortgage.

The disclosure forms offer an annual glimpse at the elected leaders' finances, showing the first family to be worth between \$2 million and \$7.2 million. That doesn't include the value of their Chicago home, which the real estate web site Zillow.com estimates at \$2.1 million. In addition to his \$400,000 annual salary, the president received between \$70,000 and \$165,000 in royalties last year from his three books.

The only debt the Obamas listed was their home mortgage, with a remaining balance between \$500,000 and \$1 million, according to the form, which lists the values of assets and liabilities in broad ranges.

Biden, 71, and his wife, Jill, 62, are of more modest means, listing assets valued between \$276,000 and \$943,000, not including the vice president's Delaware residence. Zillow.com estimates the Bidens' home to be worth \$1.4 million. Biden lists debts totaling between \$630,000 and \$1.6 million.

The Obamas have placed their wealth in a politically and financially cautious portfolio.

The bulk of the first family's money is invested in U.S. Treasury debt. The Obamas have between \$1 million and \$5 million in Treasury notes, which have a maturity between one year and 10 years. They also listed between \$250,000 and \$500,000 in Treasury bills, which have a maturity of one year or less.

In addition to the president's pension from the Illinois state legislature, where he served as a lawmaker, the Obamas listed three retirement accounts invested in the Vanguard 500 Index Fund (VFINX), with a combined balance between \$300,000 and \$750,000. The funds mimic the performance of the benchmark Standard & Poor's 500 stock index, which returned 32.36 percent last year.

The Obamas have set aside money for college costs for their two daughters, Malia, 15 and Sasha, 12. They reported having between \$200,000 and \$400,000 in tax-advantaged 529 college savings accounts.

The Obamas also ended the year with a combined balance \$151,000 and \$365,000 in three checking accounts at JPMorgan Chase & Co. and Northern Trust Corp. The first lady has her own checking account; the president doesn't.

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FOLLOWING THE CLINTONS, THE BIDENS CASH IN ON UKRAINE (HUFFPOST)

By Innokenty (kes) Grekov

Huffington Post, May 16, 2014

Perhaps Hunter Biden doesn't get his marching orders from the White House, nor does he carry enough swag to influence U.S.-Ukrainian relations. None of this will matter as the White House suffered another foreign-policy setback when Joe Biden's youngest son joined the board of directors of Ukraine's largest oil company.

Joe Biden visited Ukraine in April, reiterating Washington's support for the interim government in Kyiv. It looks like Hunter Biden will travel there often to carry out his duties for Burisma Holdings, a leading Ukrainian energy company incorporated in Cyprus.

Companies operating headquartered in Cyprus have long been the butt of jokes in Russia and Ukraine, as money-laundering schemes prevail in those murky Mediterranean waters, allowing big-ticket oligarchs and minor crooks and thieves alike to operate their corrupt schemes with no oversight and very little transparency. There's a lot of Russian money in Cyprus, folks.

Hunter Biden is mainly known as a lawyer and investor, but he is also an advocate for humanitarian causes and even a HuffPost blogger. He also sits on the Advisory Board for the National Democratic Institute (NDI), a D.C.-based outlet that runs democracy promotion and civil society development programs all over the world, including Ukraine. NDI is chiefly funded by the U.S. government, and the Kremlin's contempt for organizations like this is well-documented: after USAID's forced departure from Moscow, NDI moved its staff out of Russia. According to senior State Department official Victoria Nuland, U.S. government's democracy programming in Ukraine, run through organizations like NDI, cost U.S. tax payers 5 billion dollars since the fall of the Soviet Union.

The Kremlin must be well aware of Hunter Biden's family ties (duh!) and NDI credentials. No

matter what the White House says about the inability of Joe Biden to influence his son's work in Ukraine, the U.S. government has already lost this PR battle. Just as Washington is unable to persuade the American people that the United States has national security interests in Ukraine; nobody in Europe, Russia, or Ukraine will believe that there is no conflict of interest in Hunter Biden's appointment.

There are more intriguing connections between Ukrainian oligarchs and U.S. elites. In February, the New York Times profiled the relationship between Bill and Hillary Clinton and steel magnate Victor Pinchuk, who was in frequent contact with Hillary Clinton's State Department, for more than a decade paid a hefty \$40,000 monthly retainer to a Bill Clinton-affiliated DC lobbyist, and donated roughly 13.1 million to the Bill, Hillary, & Chelsea Clinton Foundation.

Steelworkers in Pennsylvania and Ohio are vocally unhappy about this relationship, and American steel makers are currently pursuing a case alleging:

Ukraine - and by extension Mr. Pinchuk's company, Interpipe Ltd. - and eight other countries had illegally dumped a type of steel tube used in natural gas extraction, an industry whose growth has provided one of the few bright spots in the United States manufacturing sector.

The Clintons' involvement with Mr. Pinchuk and the appointment of Hunter Biden adds to the Kremlin's arsenal of weapons for the "information war" between Russia and the West, which the Kremlin is winning by a landslide right now. It's winning the real war, too.

4 THINGS IN THE OBAMAS' FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE (CNN)

CNN, May 15, 2014

The president earns a salary of \$400,000 for his day job.

The Obamas were worth between \$2 million and \$7 million in 2013.

While about the same as the previous year, that's down considerably from 2010, when they were worth between \$2.8 million and \$11.8 million.

The financial disclosures use broad financial ranges, making more precise accounting impossible.

1. They own mostly Treasuries.

Much of their wealth - between \$1 million and \$5 million of assets - is invested in U.S. Treasury securities.

2. They don't pay the lowest mortgage rates

They pay a mortgage interest rate of 5.6% on their home in Chicago. That compares to an average mortgage interest rate this week of 4.2%.

3. Malia and Sasha don't have to take loans for college

They have between \$200,000 and \$400,000 stashed away in 529 college savings plans for their daughters Malia and Sasha.

4. President's books not bestsellers anymore

Over the years, most of the Obamas' wealth has come from the President's bestselling books "Dreams from my Father" and "Audacity of Hope."

However in 2013, a lot fewer books were sold. Royalties from those sales came in no more than \$165,000, a far cry from \$1.1 million in 2010, according to the disclosure.

The president earns a salary of \$400,000 for his day job.

Last month, the Obama's federal income tax showed joint income of \$481,098. They paid \$98,169 in total tax.

Vice President Joe Biden and his wife were worth between \$276,000 and \$943,000.

In 2013, they refinanced property and locked a lower mortgage interest rate of 3.375%, down from their previous rate of 4.62%, on their home which is worth up to \$1 million. The Bidens also refinanced a home equity loan rate down to 2.75% from 4.49%.

FALLEN LAS VEGAS POLICE OFFICER REMEMBERED AT U.S. CAPITOL (LVSRJ)

Las Vegas Review-Journal, May 16, 2014

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FALLEN ARKANSAS OFFICERS HONORED AT US CAPITOL (ARKNEWS)

Arkansas News, May 16, 2014

WASHINGTON - During a national memorial service for fallen officers, Vice President Joe Biden

spoke of the bravery of two heroes from Arkansas who did not hesitate when duty called. With the U.S. Capitol behind him, Biden delivered keynote remarks to the mothers, fathers, wives, husbands and children of the fallen as well as hundreds of officers from across the nation attending the memorial.

In praising the fallen heroes, Biden recalled the bravery of Scott County Sheriff Cody Carpenter and Wildlife Officer Joel Campora who drowned while assisting victims of an overnight flash flood along the Fourche Lefave River in Arkansas last May.

"Jumping into flooded waters ... not one of them hesitated," Biden said.

He did not mention their names but there was no doubt who he meant - at least not for the widows of Campora and Carpenter in attendance at the memorial service.

"It hit really close," said Amie Carpenter after the ceremony.

Rebecca Campora said she appreciated that Biden had taken time to get to know at least some of the stories behind the more than 100 officers who died in the line of duty in 2013.

"This wasn't just a canned speech," she said.

A National Peace Officers Memorial Service is held every May 15 at the U.S. Capitol to honor those who lost their life in the line of duty in the previous year. The memorial service culminates a week-long commemoration that also includes a candlelight vigil at the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial.

The names of nine fallen officers from Arkansas were added to the memorial this week - six who died in 2013 and three others. Sens. Mark Pryor, D-Ark., and John Boozman, R-Ark., also issued statements this week to honor the Arkansas officers.

Theresa Johnson of Clarksville was overwhelmed by the attention she and other family survivors received during the week.

"We were met at the airport with escort officers and then had a motorcade to the hotel. They blocked intersections and traffic would be stopped and there were officers standing and saluting. It was amazing," she said.

Her husband, Larry Johnson, was director of the Fifth Judicial District Drug Task Force. He died last March after suffering a heart attack while chasing a suspect.

"To hear his name called today and see all these people I know he didn't die in vain and he will be remembered," Theresa Johnson said.

The nine Arkansans whose names were added to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial aside from Campora, Carpenter and Johnson were:

- Conway Police Officer William McGary, who died in February after being hit by an intoxicated driver while directing traffic at the scene of an accident.

- Sebastian County deputy Terry Johnson, who died in March in a car accident.

- Faulkner County deputy Hans Fifer, who died in April of a heart attack while trying out with the agency's SWAT team.

- Fayetteville Assistant Police Chief Elmo Ritchie, who died in October 1968 after suffering a heart attack while attempting to place an individual in custody.

- Texarkana patrolman Richard Choate, who died after being shot six times by a robbery suspect in May 1922.

- Constable Will Dalton of Rogers, who was shot and killed attempting to arrest two robbery suspects in January 1891.

FALLEN ARKANSAS OFFICERS HONORED AT U.S. CAPITOL (TRECAK)

Fort Smith (AR) Times Record, May 16, 2014

WASHINGTON - During a national memorial service for fallen officers, Vice President Joe Biden spoke of the bravery of two heroes from Arkansas who did not hesitate when duty called. With the U.S. Capitol behind him, Biden delivered keynote remarks to the mothers, fathers, wives, husbands and children of the fallen as well as hundreds of officers from across the nation attending the memorial.

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THOUSANDS OF FALLEN OFFICERS, INCLUDING JASON ELLIS, HONORED IN (WDRBTV)
WDRB-TV Louisville (KY), May 16, 2014

WASHINGTON, D.C. (WDRB) - It's National Police Week and thousands of law enforcement officers have gathered in the nation's capital to honor those killed in the line of duty. Newly added to the memorial wall this year is Bardstown's own Jason Ellis, who was murdered in May 2013. The 33rd annual National Peace Officer's Memorial Service started at 11 a.m. and ended around 1 p.m. on the West Front of the United States Capitol in Washington, D.C.

National Police Week draws 25,000 to 40,000 people each year. Officers come from departments throughout the United States and around the world.

Thousands of fallen police officers were honored at our nation's Capitol Thursday, including Bardstown's own Jason Ellis.

It has been almost a year since Officer Ellis was gunned down, and while police still don't know who's responsible, his name has a permanent resting place in Washington.

With the U.S. Capitol visible behind him, U.S. Vice President Joe Biden spoke during the memorial service, acknowledging the bravery of the officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty.

During Thursday's ceremony, 112 fallen officers were honored, including Bardstown Police Officer Jason Ellis.

A Wreath Laying Ceremony will be held immediately following the Memorial Service at the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial.

"This is very humbling for us," said Billy Richmond with the Lexington Police Department. "This is, as sad as it is, some of the greatest satisfaction I personally think that I get being a police officer."

Ten of Ellis' former colleagues and friends made the trip to DC just for officer Ellis. Bardstown Police Chief Rick McCubbin says seeing officer Ellis' name etched in stone is an honor - but it's heartbreaking. "Now that one of my own officers is on the wall and our officers are here, it gives it a whole new meaning."

McCubbin has been taking part in National Police Week in Washington for 25 years.

"I know many years ago when I first came, I told myself when I was a young rookie cop in Louisville, I said I will never miss that because it just shows solidarity and all these men and women - over 20,000 are on this wall," McCubbin said.

While Ellis' family and friends will soon return home to Kentucky, they'll leave knowing there will always be a place to honor and remember him.

"This is the saddest fun you'll ever have, if that makes any sense," McCubbin said.

This annual National Peace Officers Memorial service has been held every year for 33 years on May 15th. The motto is never let them walk alone.

It's said their goal each year is to not have any names to read.

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JOE BIDEN ON CAMPUS SEXUAL ASSAULT: STEP UP. IT'S TIME (TIME)

TIME, May 16, 2014

Vice President Joe Biden has voiced his opinion about the sexual assault problem on college campuses across the country, telling TIME that the White House wants to pressure university presidents to figure out a better way to handle claims of rape

Joe Biden is the Vice President of the United States

I believe that the vast majority of college presidents are right minded and like stockholders putting pressure on CEOs, the White House wants to put pressure on them to change. You don't want to be a school that mishandles rape. Guess what? Step up. It's time. Its absolutely time because the moral disapprobation of society is the most powerful tool for effecting change in the cultural norms that doggedly hang on.

HOUSE SILENT ON HIGHWAY FUNDING (HILL)

By Keith Laing

The Hill, May 15, 2014

The House is staying quiet in the debate over a new transportation funding bill despite a flurry of action by senators and the Obama administration.

Senate leaders this week unveiled a six-year, \$265 billion road and transit funding package bill that will be marked up in committee on Thursday morning.

Meanwhile, the administration is pressing for action after releasing its own plan for a four-year, \$302 billion transportation measure. President Obama and Vice President Biden both delivered speeches Wednesday to tout the proposal.

"If they don't act by the end of the summer, federal funding for transportation projects will run out," Obama said in front of the Tappan Zee Bridge in New York.

"There will be no money. The cupboard will be bare. And all told, nearly 700,000 jobs would be at risk over the next year - that's like the population of Tampa and St. Louis combined."

The House has stayed out of the fray, focusing instead on a recent agreement it reached with the Senate on a smaller \$8.2 billion bill to boost U.S. port and waterways.

Transportation advocates say it's time for House Republicans to get engaged in the debate.

"We're now into mid-May, and if the CBO is correct, we're facing an insolvency," AFL-CIO

Transportation Trades Department President Ed Wytkind told The Hill. "There isn't a big vision out of the House and we need one."

Wytkind was referencing a recent projection from the Congressional Budget Office that the trust fund that is used to pay for road and transit will run out of money by the end of this summer.

The labor leader said the House's inactivity is dampening an otherwise positive week for the funding push.

"The administration is clearly all in, not only on having a bill, but they're using the powerful voices of the president, the vice-president and the [Transportation] secretary to go around the country taking the case to voters," Wytkind said.

Wytkind noted there are big differences between Obama's transportation proposal and the

Senate's, including the fact that the president is calling for lawmakers to spend approximately \$25 billion per year more on road and transit projects than the upper chamber is suggesting.

But Wytkind said he was glad the Senate was staking out a position.

"The Senate is finally doing a bill, but it doesn't reflect the administration's priorities because the administration's bill is a significant expansion," he said. "The Senate bill is just adjusted for inflation. It's basically a flat line bill. If combine those two facts, I think it's time for the House to get moving and hopefully they can come up with something big."

The key figure in the House is Rep. Bill Shuster (R-Pa.), the chairman of the Transportation Committee. Shuster is facing his primary on Thursday, and is working to fend off a challenge from businessman Art Halvorson, who has attacked his past work on pricey transportation bills.

Shuster is expected to survive the primary, but transportation advocates are worried that too much time has been lost to pass a large bill before the projected bankruptcy date for the Highway Trust Fund.

"Certainly, I would like to see the House come up with something because my expectation is that whenever Shuster does come up with something, he's going to have a very different perspective [than Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Chairman Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.)]," said Joshua Schank, who is president of the independent Eno Center for Transportation in Washington. Schank said he had "no doubt" that Shuster wants to pass a significant transportation bill during his tenure as House Transportation Committee Chairman. Shuster's father once held the same position in Congress.

But Schank said Shuster is unlikely to go along with anything similar to Boxer's plan.

"It's my impression that he had the intention of making an imprint when he took the [Transportation Committee] chairmanship," Schank said. "I don't think his goal is just 'let's pass another six years of MAP-21, which basically what Boxer is proposing.'"

Shuster's office declined to comment on the highway bill, pointing instead to the upcoming vote on final passage of the port and waterways measure.

Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) has said that the lower chamber is waiting to identify a funding mechanism to help pay for transportation projects before it releases a draft of its bill.

The traditional source for transportation funding has been the federal gas tax, which is now set at 18.4 cents-per-gallon. The gas tax has not been increased since 1993, however, and infrastructure expenses are now outpacing receipts by about \$16 billion per year.

The gas tax brings in approximately \$34 billion per year, but the current transportation bill includes more than \$50 billion in road and transit spending. Transportation advocates have said the current funding level is the bare minimum that can be spent to maintain the nation's infrastructure.

The CBO has projected that lawmakers will have to find \$100 billion in revenue, in addition to the gas tax funding, to approve a new six-year transportation bill this year.

Transportation advocates have pushed for a bill that lasts for at least six years because lawmakers approved only a two-year measure in 2012 that is expiring in the fall.

Senators this week said their \$265 billion transportation bill would last six years, but have not yet decided how to pay for it.

REAL REASON FOR BIDEN VISIT: EDITORIAL CARTOON (PLAINDLR)

Cleveland Plain Dealer, May 16, 2014

CLEVELAND, Ohio - Vice President Joe Biden made a rapid stop in Cleveland Wednesday to make a pitch for expanded federal spending on transportation infrastructure.

RTA's Little Italy-University Circle Red Line station is one of several Ohio projects that have been funded with grants from the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery program.

TIGER is part of the temporary 2009 economic stimulus package.

The Obama administration is on a road trip, highlighting projects like the Little Italy station, because Republican house members in Congress want to reduce the TIGER program funding and restrict spending to roads, bridges and highways. The Obama administration and Democrats in Congress want to keep the program all inclusive with rail, expand it, and make it permanent by merging TIGER with the Transportation Reauthorization Act.

This week in Cleveland, Biden would likely have no problem finding bipartisan support if he was seeking expanded federal funding for storm sewer infrastructure and the construction of Arks.

BIDEN URGES INFRASTRUCTURE SPENDING DURING TRIP TO CLEVELAND (TWINBULL)

Twinsburg Bulletin, May 15, 2014

Cleveland - President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe Biden are traveling the country saying the nation needs to invest billions of federal dollars in highways and bridges, but some Ohio city officials are left to wonder: Where's the money to fix our streets?

Making the pitch May 14 at a rail car repair shop in Cleveland, Biden said such investment is necessary for the U.S. to remain a pre-eminent economic force.

"Those in Congress who lack vision say we can't afford to make these investments," he said. "How can we not afford to make these investments?"

Biden was in Cleveland to highlight federal investment in a \$17.5 million new light rail station that will open in 2015. The president was in New York City, where the federal government has provided a \$1.6 billion loan to rebuild the Tappan Zee Bridge. Their message is that more money needs to be spent on infrastructure.

City officials in Ohio wish that a small share of those billions would trickle down to them for maintenance. Some Ohio cities are operating on the thinnest of margins as costs rise, tax receipts fall and state funding is reduced. Federal and state governments pay the lion's share of big road and interstate projects, but routine maintenance of surface streets is typically left to cities to pay. Police and firefighters must continue to be paid, so budget items like street resurfacing are the first to be trimmed, said Paul Barnett, public works manager for the city of Akron.

Akron will spend about \$2 million on street resurfacing this year but needs to spend at least \$8 million to keep pace, Barnett said. The city will resurface only 11 of its 2,400 lane miles this year.

"It's OK if you plan on resurfacing your streets once every 30 years," he said.

Cleveland will spend \$4.4 million. Toledo has upped its resurfacing budget to \$1 million compared with \$600,000 in 2013.

Toledo bought a machine so workers could replace entire stretches of pothole-pocked roadway, said Dave Welch, Toledo's commissioner of streets, bridges and harbor. "There are roads that are pothole patch after pothole patch," Welch said.

The inability to properly maintain streets is a problem in smaller cities as well. In Euclid, Mayor Bill Cervenik said the federal government needs to step in.

"I certainly believe the federal government has to take a look at communities like ours and understand the problems we're having and put together policies that help those communities that are built and aging and fix them," Cervenik said.

DID BIDEN POST A CAMPAIGN VIDEO TO WHITEHOUSE.GOV? (WISNAM)

WISN-AM Milwaukee, May 16, 2014

Quick, someone alert John Chisholm so he can convene a John Doe Investigation into this obvious use of government resources for campaign activity!

IF YOU'RE READING THIS, YOU DID NOT BUY JOE BIDEN'S BOOK (CALLER)

By Jim Treacher

Daily Caller, May 16, 2014

It may seem baffling that a sitting Vice President of the United States can't sell any books, until you consider that Joe Biden is a complete buffoon and everybody knows it. Why the hell would they want to buy a book with his name on it, unless it comes from The Onion?

Also, his boss has really screwed everything up, and that reflects badly on Biden. It's going to reflect badly on any Democrat who runs in 2016. You'll be able to measure this by the number of desperate MSM puff pieces about how great they are.

Their panic is only beginning to spiral. After November, their behavior will make the last 5 years look like the most uplifting episodes of The West Wing. They are on the brink of insanity, and I can't wait to watch them plunge into the abyss as Election 2016 looms.

America is tired of you, Democrats. Enjoy this time of relative peace and quiet while you can. As ye sow, so shall ye reap. And you've done a hell of a lot of sowin'.

FROM P. DIDDY TO BIDEN TO TIGER WOODS' EX, CELEBRITIES OPEN UP TO COLLEGE GRADS (TODAY)

By Eun Kyung Kim

Today Show Online, May 16, 2014

Sean "Puff Daddy" Combs received an honorary doctorate in humanities from Howard University, where he delivered the May 10 commencement speech.

Ah, college graduation season: That time of year when famous celebrities and politicians don caps and gowns to dispense pearls of wisdom to thousands of college graduates across the country.

This year's commencement season has mainly drawn attention for a string of high-profile speakers who backed out of ceremonies under a cloud of controversy. Among the notable cancellations: Christine Lagarde, managing director of the International Monetary Fund, and former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, both of whom withdrew in the wake of student protests.

Those headlines have partially deflected attention away from dozens of other speakers whose words have already inspired newly minted grads - and the dozens more who will do so over the next several weeks. Here are some highlights:

Sean 'Puff Daddy' Combs

Howard University gave an honorary doctorate to its former student, Sean "Puff Daddy/Puffy/P. Diddy" Combs, who also was the school's commencement speaker.

Combs left college before getting his degree, a decision he said he questioned many times at board room meetings he attended early in his music career.

"If I didn't leave school early, I would have been more prepared," he told Howard's Class of 2014 on May 10.

Combs described a dark period in his life when, as many of his friends graduated from Howard, he got fired from a job just weeks away from becoming a father.

"One day, you're going to be sitting in the dark like I was, thinking, 'What am I going to do?' In that moment, I want you to remember the power in you," he told the crowd.

"Nobody is going to take you to the front of the line - you need to push to the front of the line," he said.

Elin Nordegren

Real-life experience helped Elin Nordegren earn the "outstanding graduating senior" award bestowed upon her by Rollins College, where she graduated with a psychology degree and a 3.96 grade point average.

Handout / Getty Images

Elin Nordegren, the ex-wife of Tiger Woods, poses after receiving the Outstanding Graduating Senior Award for the Class of 2014 during her May 10 graduation from Rollins College.

In a rare public appearance, the ex-wife of Tiger Woods teed off about her former husband during a commencement address without ever mentioning the golf legend's name. Instead, she joked about how far she has come since the fall of 2005, when she first enrolled in the Winter Park, Fla., school.

"I was 25 years old. I had just recently moved to America. I was married without children," Nordegren told her fellow graduates. "Today, nine years later, I'm a proud American, and I have two beautiful children - but I'm no longer married."

Nordegren divorced Woods after learning in 2009 about his series of adulterous affairs. She reportedly received more than \$100 million in the settlement and, years later, she can laugh about that tumultuous time.

"It was right after I had taken communication and the media. I was unexpectedly thrust into the media limelight," she said.

"And I probably should have taken more notes in that class."

Rick Mastracchio

The commencement speech given by NASA spaceman Rick Mastracchio to University of Connecticut graduates was far out. Literally.

The astronaut spoke to the university's School of Engineering grads while floating, at times upside down, inside the International Space Station, 360 miles above Earth.

"I was trying to figure out how to make this speech different than all the other commencement addresses that are given each year," Mastracchio said. "And then I realized, I'm in a weightless environment. So maybe I should give the speech in a different orientation."

Mastracchio said he probably has "the best job on, and off, the planet." But he also spoke about the perseverance he needed to land that job: He sent in applications for nine years before finally getting accepted into the nation's elite space program.

"I wasn't just sending in an application and crossing my fingers. I was working on things to improve my chances," said Matracchio, whose May 10 speech I came just days before he returned to Earth, ending his six-month mission aboard the Space Station.

At night, he took classes to earn a second master's degree. On weekends, he worked toward getting his pilot's license.

"You become an astronaut the same way you accomplish any goal - through hard work and perseverance," he told the graduates. "Everyone has goals, dreams and wishes, but not everybody wants to do the daily work it takes to reach their goals."

U.S. astronaut Rick Mastracchio delivered a speech to University of Connecticut engineering graduates.

Upcoming celebrity speeches

The weeks ahead will include commencement addresses by former U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords and her husband, Mark Kelly, to graduates of Bard College on May 25, and Oprah Winfrey to Harvard University grads on May 30. Bill and Melinda Gates will speak at Stanford's commencement ceremony on June 15.

Coming up this weekend on May 17, fashion designer Tory Burch is scheduled to address Babson College, while Bill Nye the Science Guy is slated to speak to graduates of University of Massachusetts-Lowell.

President Barack Obama also will deliver a commencement address, speaking to Morehouse College's class of 2014 on Saturday. Just a week earlier, both the vice president and first lady gave graduation speeches of their own.

Joe Biden spoke at the University of South Carolina, warning students, "do not listen to the cynics" who doubt their potential.

First lady Michelle Obama, meanwhile, urged graduates of Dillard University to stay hungry for education, even after graduation, because it will inspire the "next generation of geniuses."

"Imagine the impact you will make," she said. "You have no excuses to stand on the sidelines. Education is still the key to real and lasting freedom. It's up to us to cultivate that hunger for education in those coming after us."

RUSSIA POURS SCORN ON NEWS OF HUNTER BIDEN'S NEW JOB (TIME)

TIME, May 16, 2014

The news that Vice President Joe Biden's son Hunter had taken a job with the Ukrainian gas company Burisma has been met in Russia with malicious glee. "Ahaha," tweeted Member of Parliament Alexander Sidyakin, reacting to the White House statement that there was no conflict of interest after the news of Hunter Biden's new role was made public on Tuesday. "Joe Biden is a good dad - took the trouble of going across the ocean to secure a job for his son," the pro-Kremlin website politrussia.ru commented in its Twitter feed, referring to Vice President's recent trip to Ukraine.

Rossiia TV channel's commentator Andrey Arkhipov said the appointment was "in line with Washington's plan to gain control over global energy resources." Dubbing Joe Biden "the curator of the military coup in Ukraine" - a reference to the ousting of pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovich in February following months of public protests - Arkhipov ridiculed the idea that no U.S. lobbying was involved in the appointment.

Top TV and radio anchor Vladimir Solovyov speculated about the fact that Burisma owned licenses for shale gas deposits in the areas of eastern Ukraine, where armed conflict between government forces and separatist insurgents is now flaring. "Let me remind you what the U.S. keeps telling Europe: Reject Russian gas. We'll provide as much gas as you need. We have shale gas technology," he said, without developing his conspiracy theory any further. Ukraine's and Europe's dependence on Russian gas supplies is a major factor in the Ukrainian geopolitical equation.

Russian media has been picturing Joe Biden as the Ukrainian government's puppeteer ever since last month's visit, which was aimed at demonstrating American support for the interim Ukrainian government. While in Kiev, Biden was filmed taking the chairperson's seat at a meeting with Ukrainian ministers. That footage featured prominently in Russian TV bulletins as an illustration of Ukraine allegedly turning into a U.S. colony.

The incident prompted a vitriolic comment by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, who said

that "Joe Biden was conducting a meeting with the Ukrainian leadership essentially in the capacity of the head of state, presiding over the table, with Ukrainian officials on his side."

JILL BIDEN TO SPEAK AT VILLANOVA COMMENCEMENT (PHILINQ)

Philadelphia Inquirer, May 16, 2014

VILLANOVA Jill Biden, a lifelong educator and the wife of Vice President Biden, is scheduled to be the commencement speaker at Villanova University's graduation on Friday.

Jill Biden, who earned a master's of arts in English from Villanova in 1991 before receiving a doctorate in education from the University of Delaware, will be awarded an honorary doctor of humanities degree.

Biden, who grew up in Willow Grove, started her education career teaching English and reading in high schools for 13 years. Since 2009, she has been a professor of English at Northern Virginia Community College.

As second lady, Biden has worked to emphasize the critical role of community colleges in creating America's workforce. She recently traveled across the country as part of the "Community College to Career" tour to highlight industry partnerships between community colleges and employers. In 2010, she hosted the first White House Summit on Community Colleges with President Obama. She is also active in supporting military families, and started the Biden Breast Health Initiative in Delaware, which over the last 21 years has educated more than 10,000 high school girls about the importance of early detection of breast cancer.

- Kathy Boccella

CUSD 201 TEACHER TURNS WHITE HOUSE VISIT INTO NEW LESSON PLAN (ILSUBLIFE)

Downers Grove (IL) Suburban Life, May 11, 2014

WESTMONT - Westmont Junior High School teacher Nancy Bartosz continues to use her travels as an educational tool.

A CUSD 201 employee of 20 years, Bartosz, 43, of Chicago, spent a year traveling around the world in 2012 before resuming her teaching career with the district and incorporating her stories in lesson plans.

"I think it's important to use real world experiences when teaching students," she said. "My mission is to engage the community and build global connections for our youth."

On May 7, Bartosz, now an eighth grade literacy teacher at the junior high, was one of 22 educators who spent the day at the White House participating in a conference for National Teacher's Appreciation Week.

The week before the event, Bartosz filled out an application after seeing a Facebook post by the U.S. Department of Education. Within days, she was notified of her acceptance and boarded a plane to Washington D.C. on May 6.

"It was a straightforward application process, but I think my responses stood out because of my travels, my digital footprint and the different roles that I have taken on at the junior high and high school," she said.

During the White House Social event, guests met national leaders and policy makers, including Second Lady Jill Biden and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, for roundtable discussions on educational excellence and student preparedness.

Attendees were required to live Tweet the events using the "WHSocial" hashtag and capture their experiences on other social media sites such as Instagram, Pinterest and Facebook.

Bartosz shared her trip the Twitter handle, @Westmont8th, and her timeline was projected in the junior high commons area for all to see. She also corresponded with multiple students, who intermittently tweeted at her throughout the day.

After watching President Barack Obama board the Marine One helicopter, the group proceeded to a conference room in the Eisenhower executive office building, where Jill Biden led a discussion about the Joining Forces Initiative and the children's book that she authored, "Don't Forget, God Bless Our Troops."

"I really enjoyed hearing the experiences of Dr. Biden - I think all the teachers did," Bartosz said.

"She is a lifelong educator and still teaches at the community college. She has a very warm, lovely personality and was very easy to relate to."

The speakers also detailed various professional learning opportunities that are readily available for

teachers. Afterwards, Bartosz said she plans to look up coming summer education camp. "Ed camps provide a place where teachers can learn how to make schools less administration centered and more teacher centered," she said. I also learned about Maker Affairs, which focus on technology, science math and inventing. It would be nice to bring those skills back to the community."

Bartosz's students will also benefit from her trip to the white house, as she plans to incorporate everything she learned into various eighth grade lesson plans.

"For me, the most powerful message that I can take back to my students relates to their digital footprint," she said. "During the conference, we talked about how to represent yourself online. Not only is it important to be aware of the negative uses of social media, but also the positive ways kids can cultivate a digital footprint."

"I was also blown away by the amount of young professionals and students that work at the White House. They are no different than students that might graduate from this district. Since returning I have told my classes that if there is something you want, apply for it, because you never know what might happen."

Get to know Nancy Bartosz

What: Eighth grade literacy teacher at Westmont Junior High School

Age: 43

Residence: Chicago

Learn more about White House initiatives and socials at www.whitehouse.gov/blog

NEW YORK TIMES AND WASHINGTON POST OP-EDS:

SEARCHING FOR FAIRNESS ON THE INTERNET (NYT)

By Editorial Board, New York Times Editorial Board

New York Times, May 16, 2014

After weeks of being criticized for a proposal that would have divided the Internet into fast and slow lanes, the Federal Communications Commission put forward a new plan on Thursday. While more balanced than its earlier approach, the commission still seems to be leaning toward creating a two-tiered system that could discriminate against smaller companies and restrict consumer choice.

The F.C.C. has been struggling for years to come up with rules to prevent phone and cable companies from blocking or interfering with Internet content. Last month, the chairman of the agency, Tom Wheeler, appeared to throw in the towel when he proposed regulations that would have allowed telecommunications companies to strike deals with firms like Netflix and Amazon for faster delivery of their videos and other data to consumers.

Then, on Thursday, the commission voted 3 to 2 along party lines to consider two options. Under the first option, the F.C.C. would require cable and phone companies to provide their broadband subscribers a basic level of unfettered Internet service. But as long as that condition is met, telecom companies would also be able to charge businesses like Netflix fees to deliver their movies faster to consumers than others.

Under the second option, the commission would reclassify broadband as a telecommunications service, akin to a public utility. That would allow for more stringent regulation that could prevent companies like Verizon and Comcast from engaging in unreasonable and unjust discrimination. Many consumer advocates like Public Knowledge and legal scholars like Tim Wu of Columbia Law School have recommended this option all along.

Mr. Wheeler and the commission's two other Democratic members say they will listen to public comments over the next four months before making up their minds about which of the two options they will pick. (The agency's two Republican members said they voted against the proposal because they do not think the F.C.C. should adopt any such rules.)

There are serious problems with the first option. It would give phone and cable companies a financial incentive to scrimp on basic high-speed Internet service in order to encourage companies like Apple or Google, which owns YouTube, to pay fees for premium delivery. Mr. Wheeler said on Thursday that he doesn't want the Internet "divided into 'haves' and 'have-nots,'" but that's exactly what would happen if the commission creates a regulatory distinction between basic and premium

offerings.

The commission would be on much more solid ground if it decided to classify broadband Internet service as a utility. Mr. Wheeler has not been very enthusiastic about this option, which has many opponents among lawmakers in Washington, particularly Republicans who usually side with deep-pocketed phone and cable companies on controversial regulatory matters. But the chairman and the other two Democrats on the commission have to consider this option seriously if they want to make sure Americans can access lawful content on the Internet without restriction.

Mr. Wheeler has said he wants to adopt final rules by the end of the year. But the F.C.C. should take more time if it needs to, as one Democratic commissioner, Jessica Rosenworcel, has suggested. These rules are too important to rush through.

A ONCE-A-DAY PILL TO PREVENT AIDS (NYT)

New York Times, May 16, 2014

Federal health officials are urging hundreds of thousands of healthy people at high risk of contracting AIDS to take a pill every day to protect themselves from the virus that causes it. The recommendation could help reduce the stubbornly high number of infections, which has held steady at 50,000 new infections a year in the United States. But the pill carries risks that must be addressed as well.

The drug, made by Gilead Sciences and known as Truvada, contains two antiviral drugs that have been used for a decade in combination with other drugs to treat people already infected with H.I.V., the virus that causes AIDS. Two years ago the Food and Drug Administration approved it for a radically different purpose - to prevent disease in people who have not yet been infected. When taken every day, the pill can be extremely effective; it protected 99 percent of the gay men in one study.

In guidelines issued Wednesday by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the pill is recommended for high-risk groups like gay men who have sex with multiple partners, heterosexuals who have sex with high-risk partners such as intravenous drug users, people in sexual relationships with someone known to be infected, prostitutes and anyone who shares needles. The pill is supposed to be used along with condoms and other safe sex practices to provide added protection, but many men could shun condoms knowing that this option is available. The dangers of that behavioral change are worrisome. Unprotected sex could lead to higher rates of syphilis, gonorrhea and other sexually transmitted diseases, as well as unwanted pregnancies. If people fail to take their pill every day, as many will, they will increase the risk of developing and spreading a resistant strain of the virus.

Truvada is also expensive - about \$13,000 a year - and usage could soar from fewer than 10,000 prescriptions a year to perhaps 500,000 a year. Most insurers and state Medicaid programs already cover the drug so patients should be able to afford it, but the cumulative cost could cause financial strains for public and private programs.

Even so, the potential benefits of preventing infections outweigh the risks, especially if steps are taken to minimize the risks. Before starting on Truvada, patients should have an H.I.V. test to make sure they are not already infected, in which case they should be taking three drugs. They should be retested every three months to determine whether they have become infected or have developed side effects or sexually transmitted diseases.

The new approach, if carried out with care, could be a big step forward in curbing the toll from AIDS.

UNSOLVED ATROCITIES IN BANGLADESH (NYT)

New York Times, May 16, 2014

It seems that the Bangladesh International Crimes Tribunal can find only one way to respond to criticism of proceedings that clearly fall short of international standards: charge critics with contempt of court.

The court sought contempt charges against Human Rights Watch last year after the group criticized its proceedings. Last month, the court charged David Bergman, a Bangladesh-based British journalist married to a prominent Bangladeshi human rights lawyer, Sara Hossain, with contempt for questioning some proceedings of the court in his blog.

The tribunal is only harming its own credibility with such charges. Set up to provide a long overdue

reckoning of the horrific crimes committed during the country's struggle for independence from Pakistan in 1971, the court has given the appearance of acting more as an instrument of partisan revenge than as a forum for impartial justice. Any criticism of it is reflexively taken as criticism of the governing Awami League and, by absurd extension, of the emergence of Bangladesh itself as an independent nation.

The court has been particularly sensitive about the number of Bangladeshis killed in that struggle. The official number in Bangladesh is three million, but while scholars agree that far too many were murdered in 1971, some believe the number is lower. It is a measure of the court's undue sensitivity that one of the contempt charges leveled against Mr. Bergman is that he merely reported this dispute.

The court also has tried people in absentia, without the benefit of a credible defense, and then sentenced them to death. It is an absurd irony that another of the contempt charges leveled against Mr. Bergman is for the regret he expressed that the trial, conviction and death sentence against Chowdhury Mueen Uddin, a British resident, took place in absentia. The court had based its charges against Mr. Uddin largely on information revealed in Mr. Bergman's 1995 documentary film, "War Crimes File."

Embarrassed by reports about Mr. Bergman's plight, the International Crimes Tribunal has instituted a gag order against the press. Muzzling the press will only further erode the reputation of the court, whose contempt for international standards of justice appears to know no bounds.

FORCE-FEEDINGS AT GUANTÁNAMO (NYT)

New York Times, May 16, 2014

Nothing comes to light easily at the Guantánamo Bay military prison in Cuba where 154 detainees are held on suspicion of terrorist activities. Some have been incarcerated for more than a decade, in a legal limbo that remains a grave embarrassment to American justice.

This week, one of the lawsuits by a Guantánamo detainee produced news that the military has apparently been videotaping its force-feedings of prisoners who have been attempting a hunger strike to protest their confinement and treatment. Pentagon officials admitted last year that the cause of the hunger strike was prisoners' despairing that they would ever be released.

The disclosure is important because a federal appeals court in the District of Columbia decided in February that while it would not initially block the force-feedings (in which prisoners are restrained and fed by a tube through the nose), it would retain jurisdiction and hear prisoners' complaints of inhumane treatment as part of a habeas corpus lawsuit. This could prove to be one of the more promising avenues in the struggle to expose the woeful situation at Guantánamo to greater public attention.

Detainees' lawyers have asked the court to issue an emergency order to prevent the government from destroying any existing video recordings of the force-feedings, after learning of their existence on May 13. Seven years ago at the height of the controversy over waterboarding, the Central Intelligence Agency was found to have destroyed videotapes of interrogation sessions using that torture technique.

President Obama has sought to shut down Guantánamo, but Congress has barred the transfer of detainees to mainland prisons. Administration lawyers insisted this week that there would be "robust protection" of national security if the detainees were transferred, but Congress remains adamant in refusing to close the facility.

The court should order the military to preserve the tapes and to hand them over to the prisoners' lawyers. The hunger strike and force-feedings are a sorry chapter in the long-running travesty of justice that festers in Guantánamo.

THE MAN IN A RED BANDANNA (NYT)

New York Times, May 16, 2014

Among the many moving moments at the dedication of the National September 11 Memorial Museum in Lower Manhattan on Thursday was a story President Obama told about the man in a red bandanna. Bewildered and frightened, the people huddled in the smoke and darkness that day on the 78th floor of the World Trade Center's south tower heard a voice, clear and calm, leading them to the stairs and to safety. Their guide was a young man holding a red handkerchief over his face.

Having helped them, he then went back up the stairs to help others.

"They didn't know his name. They didn't know where he came from. But they knew their lives had been saved by the man in the red bandanna," the president said.

When Alison Crowther heard this story a few months after the towers collapsed, she knew their hero was her son Welles Crowther, 24. The young man, who had kept a red handkerchief with him since he was a boy, was one of almost 3,000 people who did not survive the attacks. One of his bandannas is now on display at the museum, a reminder, as the president said, of "the true spirit of 9/11 - love, compassion, sacrifice."

Mr. Obama and other dignitaries wisely avoided the temptation to use the occasion to make political points or engage in overblown rhetoric, focusing instead on the stories of heroism and survival that are told throughout the cavernous underground museum. The speakers also turned to smaller objects to make larger points about bravery - Todd Beamer's watch, permanently seared at the number 11, reminding us how he and fellow passengers on United Airlines Flight 93 overpowered the hijackers, dying as their jet crashed in Pennsylvania instead of allowing the attackers to reach the White House.

Forgotten for the day were years of skirmishing among museum leaders, politicians and family members. And saved for later were the pleas from museum officials about the need for more federal money from the president and his colleagues in Washington to support this national memorial. Instead, it was a day for remembering extraordinary people like Welles Crowther.

THE COMMENCEMENT BIGOTS (NYT)

By Timothy Egan

New York Times, May 16, 2014

It's commencement season, cellphones off please, no texts or tweets. Even with a hangover from debt, alcohol or regret, grads across the land may be lucky enough to hear something on the Big Day that actually stays with them.

Among the best of the past were the words of the novelist David Foster Wallace, talking to the newly minted at Kenyon College in 2005. If you can't learn to "construct meaning from experience," he said, "you will be totally hosed."

There was Steve Jobs, college dropout, at Stanford in the same year, on mortality: "Remembering that I'll be dead soon is the most important tool I've ever encountered to help me make the big choices in life." And don't forget the lasting guidance from Stephen Colbert at Knox College in 2006: "The best career advice I can give you is to get your own TV show. It pays well, the hours are good, and you are famous. And eventually, some very nice people will give you a doctorate in fine arts for doing jack squat."

This year, there's the remarkable life story of the African-American scholar who grew up in the segregated South and rose to become secretary of state. Didn't hear that one? Nobody did. Condoleezza Rice was scheduled to give the 248th anniversary commencement address at Rutgers University this coming Sunday. She canceled after a small knot of protesters pressured the university. It's no contest who showed more class.

Near as I can tell, the forces of intolerance objected to her role in the Iraq war. O.K. And by shutting her down, the point is ... what? That extremism, whether in the climate-denial echo chamber of Republican Party elites or in the fragile zone of college faculty lounges, is the worst enemy of free speech.

Thanks to the bigots, Smith College graduates will be deprived of the thoughts of Christine Lagarde, chief of the International Monetary Fund. She withdrew this week, under pressure from people who object to the I.M.F.'s role in the "strengthening of imperialist and patriarchal systems." So, one of the world's most powerful women will not share insights with one of the nation's most prominent women's colleges because of a concern about patriarchy. Evil men - that'll show 'em. This was followed by the swift departure of Robert J. Birgeneau, a former chancellor of the University of California, Berkeley, as a speaker at Haverford College. Yes, you heard that right: The man from Berkeley is not suitable for the sensitive souls of Haverford.

For guidance, these censors could have consulted the Rutgers student mission statement. "We embrace difference by cultivating inclusiveness and respect of both people and points of view." Diversity of perspective? Thy name should be academia. But of late, too many schools are opting for well-vetted bores. Pursue your dream, live your own life, don't forget to floss or use sunscreen,

and if you're forced to share a hall with people you don't like, shout them down and kick them out the door.

The foreign policy that Rice guided for George W. Bush - two wars on the credit card, making torture a word associated with the United States - was clearly a debacle. Contemporary assessments were not kind, and history will be brutal.

But if every speaker has to pass a test for benign mediocrity and politically correct sensitivity, commencement stages will be home to nothing but milquetoasts. You want torture? Try listening to the Stanford speech of 2009, when Justice Anthony M. Kennedy gave an interminable address on the intricacies of international law, under a broiling sun, with almost no mention of the graduates. Give me a brisk, strong, witty defense of something I disagree with over a tired replay of platitudes. It matters little if the speaker is a convict or a seminarian, a statesman or a comedian.

This season, the left is better than the right at pressure tactics designed to kill opposing views. But who wants to claim that title?

Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr. recently canceled an address at the graduation ceremony of the Oklahoma City police academy after he was harassed by gun nuts and Republican elected officials - often a redundancy, I realize. Organizers called for officers in attendance to "place Holder in handcuffs." Good lesson for the grads - arrest the nation's highest law enforcement officer because you don't share his politics. One Republican, an Oklahoma state senator, Paul Wesselhoft, cheered the strong-arm tactics. "This is a significant lesson in political activism," he said. No, it's a primer in how to be a bully.

In that sense, the lefty thought police at Smith, Haverford and Rutgers share one thing with the knuckle-dragging hard right in Oklahoma: They're afraid of hearing something that might spoil a view of the world they've already figured out.

POINTS OF NO RETURN (NYT)

By Paul Krugman

New York Times, May 16, 2014

Recently two research teams, working independently and using different methods, reached an alarming conclusion: The West Antarctic ice sheet is doomed. The sheet's slide into the ocean, and the resulting sharp rise in sea levels, will probably happen slowly. But it's irreversible. Even if we took drastic action to limit global warming right now, this particular process of environmental change has reached a point of no return.

Meanwhile, Senator Marco Rubio of Florida - much of whose state is now fated to sink beneath the waves - weighed in on climate change. Some readers may recall that in 2012 Mr. Rubio, asked how old he believed the earth to be, replied "I'm not a scientist, man." This time, however, he confidently declared the overwhelming scientific consensus on climate change false, although in a later interview he was unable to cite any sources for his skepticism.

So why would the senator make such a statement? The answer is that like that ice sheet, his party's intellectual evolution (or maybe more accurately, its devolution) has reached a point of no return, in which allegiance to false doctrines has become a crucial badge of identity.

I've been thinking a lot lately about the power of doctrines - how support for a false dogma can become politically mandatory, and how overwhelming contrary evidence only makes such dogmas stronger and more extreme. For the most part, I've been focusing on economic issues, but the same story applies with even greater force to climate.

To see how it works, consider a topic I know well: the recent history of inflation scares.

More than five years have passed since many conservatives started warning that the Federal Reserve, by taking action to contain the financial crisis and boost the economy, was setting the stage for runaway inflation. And, to be fair, that wasn't a crazy position to take in 2009; I could have told you it was wrong (and, in fact, I did), but you could see where it was coming from.

Over time, however, as the promised inflation kept failing to arrive, there should have come a point when the inflationistas conceded their error and moved on.

In fact, however, few did. Instead, they mostly doubled down on their predictions of doom, and some moved on to conspiracy theorizing, claiming that high inflation was already happening, but was being concealed by government officials.

Why the bad behavior? Nobody likes admitting to mistakes, and all of us - even those of us who try not to - sometimes engage in motivated reasoning, selectively citing facts to support our

preconceptions.

But hard as it is to admit one's own errors, it's much harder to admit that your entire political movement got it badly wrong. Inflation phobia has always been closely bound up with right-wing politics; to admit that this phobia was misguided would have meant conceding that one whole side of the political divide was fundamentally off base about how the economy works. So most of the inflationistas have responded to the failure of their prediction by becoming more, not less, extreme in their dogma, which will make it even harder for them ever to admit that they, and the political movement they serve, have been wrong all along.

The same kind of thing is clearly happening on the issue of global warming. There are, obviously, some fundamental factors underlying G.O.P. climate skepticism: The influence of powerful vested interests (including, though by no means limited to, the Koch brothers), plus the party's hostility to any argument for government intervention. But there is clearly also some kind of cumulative process at work. As the evidence for a changing climate keeps accumulating, the Republican Party's commitment to denial just gets stronger.

Think of it this way: Once upon a time it was possible to take climate change seriously while remaining a Republican in good standing. Today, listening to climate scientists gets you excommunicated - hence Mr. Rubio's statement, which was effectively a partisan pledge of allegiance.

And truly crazy positions are becoming the norm. A decade ago, only the G.O.P.'s extremist fringe asserted that global warming was a hoax concocted by a vast global conspiracy of scientists (although even then that fringe included some powerful politicians). Today, such conspiracy theorizing is mainstream within the party, and rapidly becoming mandatory; witch hunts against scientists reporting evidence of warming have become standard operating procedure, and skepticism about climate science is turning into hostility toward science in general.

It's hard to see what could reverse this growing hostility to inconvenient science. As I said, the process of intellectual devolution seems to have reached a point of no return. And that scares me more than the news about that ice sheet.

IRELAND'S TROUBLED PEACE (NYT)

By Colum McCann

New York Times, May 16, 2014

FORTY years ago this Saturday, three no-warning bombs ripped through Dublin. Less than an hour later, another bomb shattered the rural quiet of the town of Monaghan. In all, 33 people were killed and more than 300 injured. In Dublin, sheets of newspaper were laid over the dismembered bodies to hide them from view. The headlines soaked up the blood: the news in advance. There would be more bloody headlines; over the next 24 years, 3,600 people would lose their lives in what have euphemistically been called the Irish "Troubles."

The Troubles ended with the historic peace accords of 1998, which have held, more or less, since then. If the Irish peace process was once a toddler, it is now nearing the age where it must ready itself for university, or a job, or perhaps, most chillingly, the unemployment line.

And yet we can't quite get away from the past, and the reminder that however mature the peace, it is always at risk of faltering, or of falling apart. Justice can be parlayed into revenge.

Just two weeks ago the president of the Irish nationalist Sinn Féin party, Gerry Adams, was arrested and interrogated for four days about the kidnapping and murder of Jean McConville, a mother of 10 who disappeared over 40 years ago. Her body was found on a windswept beach 11 years ago, a bullet hole in the back of the skull.

On Belfast's nationalist Falls Road, a freshly painted mural of Mr. Adams that read "Peacemaker, Leader, Visionary" appeared on a wall, while across town Mervyn Gibson, the chaplain for the Protestant Orange Order said: "Sadly, it's not a memorial mural."

Irish nationalists saw the arrest as an exercise in public humiliation in the run-up to local and European elections. On the other hand, pro-British loyalists were incensed that while Mr. Adams was brought in for questioning, over the years the British government had written 200 letters to fugitives suspected of membership in the Irish Republican Army, saying that there would be no prosecutions.

Meanwhile the atmosphere between leaders inside the Northern Ireland power-sharing executive branch has turned distinctly sour, with the Unionist first minister, Peter Robinson, and the deputy

first minister, Martin McGuinness of Sinn Féin, trading verbal jabs of "cowardice" and resignation threats over attacks by suspected paramilitary loyalists in Belfast. And there is a sense on both sides that the British government in particular has walked away, furtively, unwilling to look back. The peace may be holding, but the process is faltering. Just five months ago, the political parties failed to agree on proposals put forward by Richard N. Haass, an American envoy to the peace process. The most notable obstacles were the matter of flags, parades and how to "contend" with the past, namely through a "historical investigations unit" to carry out inquiries into Troubles-related killings.

What Mr. Haass left behind was a country distinctly unsure of itself. Investment in Northern Ireland has soared in recent years. A sense of color and charm has seeped into the streets. Checkpoints have disappeared. Festivals abound. Sixteen years of peace have meant that a whole generation has grown up without the daily litany of violence.

At the same time, many Catholics and Protestants live in walled-off mini-citadels and their children go to separate schools. A rash of xenophobic attacks against Eastern Europeans have occurred in Belfast, with "Locals Only" scrawled on wooden panels placed over shattered windows.

And small eruptions of violence hit regularly; virtually every year the failure to agree on parade marching routes and the politics of flags serves up yet another reason for the Molotov cocktails to fly. It's a small sky over Northern Ireland, but there's a lot of smoke.

The people of Ireland and Britain still desperately want the peace to continue. It's one of the few things that we have excelled at in recent years. It is a moral commodity. We have put a lot of energy into it. It makes us look good.

If it falters, it will be a disaster not only for us but for the rest of the world. Peace is not a local thing. That's what makes it superior to war. War stays where war is. Peace belongs elsewhere, as well as at home. That's part of its muscle. The presence of peace in Ireland is a lifeline, however tentative, to Syria, to Ukraine, to Colombia.

But the sense of exhaustion in Northern Ireland is a self-perpetuating time bomb. This is not just petty political squabbling. Peace - especially at the delicate age of 16 - can have an ego. It can turn off its calculating mind and fall into the dark pit of being satisfied with itself. Forging a continuing peace process means understanding that there are always going to be several viable truths. The peacemaker - as Senator George J. Mitchell, who negotiated the peace, learned in 1998 - must show the tenacity of a fanatic.

It is, of course, naïve to expect total reconciliation. Some grievances are so deep that the people who suffered them will never be satisfied. But the point is not satisfaction - the point is that the present is superior to the past, and it has to be cultivated as such.

Despite the fact that the Obama administration has not appointed an ambassador to Ireland for a year and a half (the longest period that America has not had a top diplomat in Dublin), the White House is still vital to preserving and re-energizing the peace.

Once upon a time, there were bullets in the back of the head. There were car bombs along South Leinster Street. There were young girls getting tarred and feathered in the flatlands of Belfast.

That's not happening anymore. But just because it's not happening now, doesn't mean it will not happen again. To lose the process now would be an international crime that reaches backward and forward both.

Colum McCann is the author of the novel "TransAtlantic" and a co-founder of Narrative 4, a global story exchange project.

STAIRWAY TO WISDOM (NYT)

By David Brooks

New York Times, May 16, 2014

Let's say you wanted to understand a social problem in depth. Let's say you wanted to move from a dry, statistical understanding of a problem to a rich, humane one. How would you do it? What steps would you take on your climb toward understanding?

Well, obviously, first you'd start with the data. Let's say, for example, you were studying teenage pregnancy. You'd want to understand the basic facts and trends. You'd discover from a recent Brookings Institution report that annual teenage childbearing rates have declined by an astonishing 52 percent since 1991.

Next you'd want to get some grasp of the general causes for this phenomenon. At this stage, you

would consult the academic research.

This research casts doubt on some possible explanations for the amazing decline. Teenage pregnancy rates are not falling because abortion is on the rise. As far as we can tell, abortion rates are falling, too. Better sexual education must have had some role, but that doesn't explain the trend either. Teen pregnancy is declining just as much in states like Texas without comprehensive sex ed as it is in states like New Jersey with it.

On the other hand, improved contraception is working. Pregnancy rates fall as people move away from condoms toward IUDs. Sexual attitudes are changing, too. Teenagers are having their first sexual experiences later than they used to and they are less sexually active than previous generations.

This academic research offers a look at general tendencies within groups. The research helps you to make informed generalizations about how categories of people are behaving. If you use it correctly, you can even make snappy generalizations about classes of people that are fun and useful up to a point.

But this work is insufficient for anyone seeking deep understanding. Unlike minnows, human beings don't exist just as members of groups. We all know people whose lives are breathtakingly unpredictable: a Mormon leader who came out of the closet and became a gay dad; an investment banker who became a nun; a child with a wandering anthropologist mom who became president. We all slip into the general patterns of psychology and sociology sometimes, but we aren't captured by them. People live and get pregnant one by one, and each life and each pregnancy has its own unlikely story. To move the next rung up the ladder of understanding you have to dive into the tangle of individual lives. You have to enter the realm of fiction, biography and journalism. My academic colleagues sometimes disparage journalism, but, when done right, it offers a higher form of knowing than social science research.

By conducting sensitive interviews and by telling a specific story, the best journalism respects the infinite dignity of the individual, and the unique blend of thoughts and feelings that go into that real, breathing life.

A pregnancy, for example, isn't just a piece of data in a set. It came about after a unique blend of longings and experiences. Maybe a young woman just wanted to feel like an adult; maybe she had some desire for arduous love, maybe she was just absent-minded, or loved danger, or couldn't resist her boyfriend, or saw no possible upside for her future anyway. In each case the ingredients will be different. Only careful case-by-case storytelling can uncover and respect the delirious iconoclasm of how life is actually lived.

But even this isn't the highest rung on the ladder of understanding. Statisticians, academics and journalists all adopt a dispassionate pose. Academics rely on formal methodology and jargon. Journalists observe from behind the wall of their notebooks.

The highest rung on the stairway to understanding is intimacy. Our master-teacher here is Augustine. As he aged, Augustine came to reject those who thought they could understand others from some detached objective stance.

He came to believe that it takes selfless love to truly know another person. Love is a form of knowing and being known. Affection motivates you to want to see everything about another. Empathy opens you up to absorb the good and the bad. Love impels you not just to observe, but to seek union - to think as another thinks and feel as another feels.

There is a tendency now, especially for those of us in the more affluent classes, to want to use education to make life more predictable, to seek control as the essential good, to emphasize data that masks the remorseless unpredictability of individual lives. But people engaged in direct contact with problems like teenage pregnancy are cured of those linear illusions. Those of us who work with data and for newspapers probably should be continually reminding ourselves to bow down before the knowledge of participation, to defer to the highest form of understanding, which is held by those who walk alongside others every day, who know the first names, who know the smells and fears.

MARCO RUBIO ON THE 'SETTLED SCIENCE' OF ABORTION (NYT)

By Juliet Lapidus

New York Times, May 16, 2014

Sick of taking flak for his climate-change denial, Senator Marco Rubio tried to change the topic (a

classic crisis-management move) by accusing his critics of hypocrisy (another classic).

It's hypocritical, Mr. Rubio told Sean Hannity on Wednesday, for "all these people" to "wag their finger" at him about "science and settled science" - because there's another area of settled science they don't like to discuss.

"Let me give you a bit of settled science that they'll never admit to. The science is settled, it's not even a consensus, it is a unanimity, that human life begins at conception. So I hope the next time someone wags their finger about science, they'll ask one of these leaders on the left: 'Do you agree with the consensus of scientists that say that human life begins at conception?' I'd like to see someone ask that question."

That's pretty cunning, in part because it's hard to craft a rebuttal that doesn't sound callous or lawyerly. E.g.: that's not the point or it depends on what the meaning of 'life' is. But Mr. Rubio probably knows that he's obfuscating what-for most people-is the real issue: Not life, full stop (single-celled organisms are alive) but personhood, which is more a philosophical than a scientific question.

Some abortion opponents believe fervently that a fertilized egg is a person, from a rights standpoint. Others obviously disagree. And in fact so-called "personhood" amendments, which define a fertilized egg as a person, have failed in even social-conservative strongholds. Historically the "quickening," when a pregnant woman first perceives fetal movements, was used as a marker for the legal beginning of life. Life "begins in contemplation of law as soon as an infant is able to stir in the mother's womb," wrote the British legal scholar William Blackstone in the 18th century.

Mr. Rubio also ignores the fraught - and, again, philosophical as opposed to scientific - question of whether, or at what point or under which circumstances the rights of the fetus trump those of the mother. Many Americans who otherwise oppose abortion believe it should be permissible in cases of rape or incest or to save the life of the mother. Presumably their views on when life begins aren't germane; they're weighing social and emotional considerations.

Mr. Rubio's comments also raise the uncomfortable question of whether he's prepared to be guided by science in the various tricky issues surrounding the national debate over abortion. As noted in this MSNBC piece, Mr. Rubio has a history of supporting abortion regulations with no scientific merit.

GREAT RUSSIA'S GRAND CHOICE (NYT)

By Maxim Trudolyubov

New York Times, May 16, 2014

MOSCOW - For most of the post-Soviet years, Russia has been torn by a question that haunts its people and their rulers: Do Russians want their country to be an imperialist power feared by other nations or a land whose primary concern is its citizens' well-being?

President Vladimir V. Putin has resolved the issue, or so it seems. He has decided to tip the balance in favor of ambitious expansionist politics rather than domestic development. Prosperity for the people is all very well up to a point, but it has a downside: It produces independent-minded individuals who may try to vote their ruler out of office.

Pursuing grand strategies on the international stage is safer - at least for Russia's powers that be. Defending the Russian-speaking populations of the former Soviet Union creates so much tension both at home and abroad that the domestic economic agenda is dwarfed in comparison. Who cares about economic deterioration, poor public services or endemic corruption when the nation is gripped by imperialist fervor?

But in pushing Russian expansionism is Mr. Putin really making a safer bet? When asked by pollsters about what Russia's priorities should be, respondents are generally divided. In a recent survey by the Levada Center, a Russian nongovernmental research organization, 48 percent favored prioritizing the country's international standing, while 47 percent said they favored a government that concentrated on creating conditions for individual prosperity.

Almost a decade ago, there were indications that this dilemma was close to being resolved in favor of economic progress and peaceful nation-building. According to a poll conducted in 2005 by Levada, more than 60 percent of respondents said they would prefer to live in a nation with higher living standards, while 36 percent counted national "greatness" as a priority. But that resolve proved temporary.

Back in 2007, Michael Porter, a Harvard business professor, advised the Kremlin on economic

matters. He and his team then wrote in an analysis of Russian competitiveness that differences of opinion within the government "go beyond the usual policy disagreements that are present in many governments" and "strike to the heart of the goals of the nation itself."

They continued: "Is the goal politics or prosperity for citizens? There is no clear mechanism to resolve these incompatible aspirations. Instead, conflicting signals threaten to cancel each other out and, even worse, create a high level of uncertainty about future policies."

One has to remember that, in a country where the mass media is under strict government control, public opinion may be easily skewed. For several years, especially since street protests erupted in late 2011 and the Kremlin was shocked to discover serious public discontent, the state propaganda machine has been busy inventing or exaggerating threats the Russians are supposedly facing. Mr. Putin embarked on a radical information offensive to divide and frighten his countrymen.

The current streak of anti-Ukrainian and anti-Western propaganda - fraught with menacing imagery of Ukrainian fascists and their American puppeteers - is only a recent chapter in a larger PR-strategy. Past Kremlin agitprop has included dire warnings of vague conspiracies to overthrow the government, attacks on artists supposedly seeking to humiliate the Russian church, and warnings that homosexuals and a "pedophile lobby" are using the Internet to undermine the traditional family and Russian society.

These threats, fomented by the state-controlled media, are an excuse to increase the security budget, push anti-gay legislation and laws against "blasphemy," and establish control over the Internet.

The Kremlin's current propaganda campaign, focused on the "Ukrainian threat," has been paraded as a justification for military activity along that country's borders, for possible covert use of force inside Ukraine and for an all-out information war against the West.

Given the intensity of the media blitz, it's a sign of relative sanity that only half of Russians are choosing sovereign and military greatness over well-being.

"Despite all the propaganda, half of the country is resisting the imperialist temptation," says Vladimir Magun, a sociologist with the Russian Academy of Sciences.

Mr. Putin's annexation of Crimea appears to be overwhelmingly popular, but that is because the true cost is being hidden. The Russian public has readily bought the propaganda message that it received Crimea as a free gift, says Mr. Magun, but it's like shopping in a store with no price tags. A disappointment awaits us at the exit: Stores that don't display price tags are usually very expensive.

As a result of Mr. Putin's adventure, Russians can expect higher borrowing costs and a decrease in the value of the ruble, and along with that, a decrease in the value of their savings. Mr. Putin is risking a severe economic downturn and even a regional war.

The president must understand that he won't be able to avoid economic realities: We can't race ahead without fundamental improvements in Russia's global competitiveness. The economy is in recession, and though the effects have not yet trickled down to most Russians, tougher economic times lie ahead. That will bring a day of reckoning.

Mr. Putin will argue that the West is punishing Russia for its international ambitions and that we, the Russian people, will have to persevere.

This is the type of social contract the Soviet government used to impose on its citizens: The enemy is at the gate, and we all have to hunker down. Mr. Putin is bringing this siege mentality back because he knows very well how to work it to his advantage.

The choice between "greatness" on the world stage and domestic prosperity is a false one. Russia can be a formidable world power while flourishing at home.

Maxim Trudolyubov is the opinion page editor of the business newspaper Vedomosti.

MR. OBAMA IS CHOOSING NOT TO ACT ON SYRIA (WP)

Washington Post, May 16, 2014

THE PRINCIPAL achievement the Obama administration might claim in an otherwise tragically failed response to Syria's civil war is eroding. Last September President Obama brokered an agreement with Russia under which the regime of Bashar al-Assad was to give up its stockpile of chemical weapons and join the Chemical Weapons Convention, which prohibits production or use of those horrific arms.

Yet months after the expiration of the February deadline for removing all chemical stocks from Syria's territory, the regime not only retains a substantial stockpile but also has returned to assaulting civilian areas with chemicals. The Obama administration's response is all too familiar: It is trying to avoid acknowledging those facts.

Administration spokesmen boast that 92.5 percent of Syria's chemical weapons and precursors have been removed from the country for destruction by the end of June. But Damascus is dragging its feet on delivering the last 27 tons of chemicals used to make deadly sarin gas. According to The Post's Ernesto Londoño and Greg Miller, U.S. officials believe the Assad regime is using the stocks as leverage to retain a network of tunnels and buildings that could be used as storage or production facilities, which the Organisation for Prohibition of Chemical Weapons wants destroyed.

Meanwhile, British, French and U.S. intelligence analysts have concluded that Syria is probably hiding part of its arsenal that it failed to declare, including stocks of sarin and mustard gas, according to news reports. State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki confirmed last week that the United States has been skeptical about whether Assad has revealed the extent of Syria's chemical weapons stockpile.

Finally, evidence is piling up that Assad's forces have been dropping bombs filled with chlorine on opposition-held areas. France's foreign minister told reporters in Washington on Tuesday that there had been at least 14 such attacks since October. Laurent Fabius, who said "things would have been different" had Mr. Obama not backed away from using force in response to a chemical weapons attack last August, said the "regime is still capable of producing chemical weapons and is determined to use them."

Ms. Psaki said April 21 that the United States had "indications" of the use of chlorine, which is not one of the chemicals Syria was obliged to surrender. But the Obama administration has taken the position that it must await an investigation by the OPCW before reaching a definite conclusion. Meanwhile, the chlorine attacks have continued. An unnamed senior U.S. official offered Mr. Londoño and Mr. Miller a frank explanation of this filibuster: "There's reluctance to call attention to it because there's not much we can do about it."

There are, of course, many actions Mr. Obama could take to punish Syria for its use of chemical weapons and to prevent their further deployment. He could begin by granting the opposition's request for antiaircraft missiles to use against the helicopters that are dropping chlorine bombs. He could revive his plan to launch U.S. military strikes against Syrian infrastructure that supports those attacks.

In reality, Mr. Assad is being allowed to disregard his chemical weapons commitment with impunity not because there's nothing the United States can do but because Mr. Obama chooses to do nothing.

HOW THAILAND IS CONTRIBUTING TO THE MISERY OF BURMA'S PERSECUTED ROHINGYA (WP)

By Editorial Board

Washington Post, May 16, 2014

FOR SOME time now, tens of thousands of Rohingya Muslims have been fleeing persecution and economic deprivation in Burma, also known as Myanmar, by boat. While some go off to work and send money home, others have staked all on a permanent exodus, setting sail in search of better times. They don't always find it. Hundreds have died at sea and others have been pulled into a growing vortex of human smuggling.

In 2013, Reuters published a series of remarkable articles that added a new dimension to the Ro-hingya exodus. The news service said its investigation showed that some Thai naval security forces work with smugglers to profit from the fleeing Rohingya. In a July 17 dispatch, Reuters said the lucrative smuggling network transports the Ro-hingya mainly into Malaysia, a Muslim-majority nation that the Rohingya view as a haven. The Reuters investigation showed that the Thai navy has played a role in spotting boats carrying the refugees and putting them in the hands of the smugglers, who demand money from families for onward passage. According to the Reuters report, Thai naval forces are paid about \$65 per Rohingya "for spotting a boat or turning a blind eye" to the smuggling.

The flight of the Rohingya often ends tragically. The Reuters investigation quoted estimates that in

the past year as many as 800 people, mostly Rohingya, have died at sea after their boats broke down or capsized. Those who make it off the seas often are trapped by the smugglers. Men who can't pay the smugglers are handed over to traffickers who sell them into slavery or as indentured servants, while some women are sold as brides.

Reuters won the 2014 Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting for the series. The award cited Jason Szep and Andrew R.C. Marshall for their "courageous reports on the violent persecution of the Rohingya, a Muslim minority in Myanmar that, in efforts to flee the country, often falls victim to predatory human-trafficking networks."

In addition to Reuters, a Thai news Web site, Phuketwan, has carried stories for seven years describing the flight of the Rohingya.

So what has Thailand done? Instead of seeking to rectify the situation, the Royal Navy has denied mistreating the refugees and decided to intimidate the messenger. Allying criminal defamation and a breach of national computer crimes law, the navy filed complaints in December against Phuketwan, which had carried the Reuters stories in addition to its own reporting. In recent days, a similar complaint was lodged against Reuters. In both, those convicted could face up to seven years in prison and a fine, according to Phuketwan.

This is a sad case of Thailand's navy attempting to extinguish reporting rather than the misery that the reporting exposed. It is wrong to punish the journalists. But this misguided attempt at coercion is doubly wrong because it attempts to hide the shameful treatment of a people, the Rohingya, who are already suffering far too much.

Read more about this issue: Holly Atkinson and Michael Abramowitz: Burma's Rohingya need protection The Post's View: Unspeakable violence against Muslims in Burma The Post's View: Calibrating U.S. policy on Burma Michael Green and Daniel Twining: U.S. is moving too fast on Burma The Post's View: U.N. Human Rights Council should keep an eye on Burma Desmond Tutu: Burma's chance to do right by all its people

EUROPEAN UNION IS FORCING GOOGLE TO 'FORGET' SOME LINKS IN A BLOW TO PUBLIC INFORMATION (WP)

Washington Post, May 16, 2014

MANY PEOPLE have a link or two they wish wouldn't pop up when they Google their own names. They will appreciate the motivation of an audacious ruling the European Court of Justice handed down Monday. But the ruling could easily damage the flow of information on which the Internet depends.

The case was brought by a Spanish lawyer who wanted Google to remove links to articles legally published in 1998 by a newspaper about old tax debts. Spanish authorities agreed with him, but the country's courts asked European Union jurists for legal guidance. The result was a ruling that is vague and nearly impenetrable, leaving the details for officials, courts and private companies to fill in. But the essential principle is this: The rights of individuals to control information that concerns them "override, as a general rule, the interest of Internet users."

That logic should be reversed, particularly when public information is at issue. It is dangerous when any government demands that legitimately published material on the public record be obscured, whether to protect individuals' feelings or the reputations of those in high office. Activists, concerned citizens and all sorts of ordinary people - yes, even journalists - could be denied ready access to information that may seem "irrelevant" to European officials but turns out to be important in public and private life. If there is to be a general principle, it should be to treat search-engine removal requests with extreme caution. Instead, the European court has made it hard for Google to refuse them.

The company may well see a deluge of privacy requests, and it may incur fines if it makes the wrong call. Faced with this equation, the company will have legal and financial incentives to remove links. Google already has received demands from a politician, a doctor and a person convicted of child pornography to remove links to unflattering material, in newspaper articles and on review Web sites, from search results. The court suggested that there must be a balance between privacy protections and the flow of public information and that public officials would get less deference. But that may not be the practical result.

Even if Google tries to keep as many links in its results as possible, there are a variety of difficult lines that someone will have to draw - very possibly to the detriment of the public. Who, for

example, counts as a public figure? An ex-politician? A politician's children, who may run for office in a few years? A significant shareholder in a factory that environmental activists are investigating? Are lawyers' past tax debts really irrelevant to their potential clients, as the Spanish case suggests? What about reviews on Web sites such as Yelp? Should they be harder to find after some time? How much time?

Concerns about privacy are serious. Companies such as Google may have to work harder to allay these concerns, and countries may not want to leave this difficult balancing entirely to the private sector. But as European governments begin to implement this court decision, they should give more weight to the public's interest in the free flow of information than the judges did.

Read more about this issue: Justin Moyer: The case against the Google Doodle Richard Cohen: The NSA is doing what Google does The Post's View: Google's privacy policy complicates protecting personal data Craig A. Newman: Advancing Internet freedom doesn't come for free

WHY THE MIDEAST PEACE PROCESS IS IN TATTERS (WP)

By David Ignatius

Washington Post, May 16, 2014

Sometimes things have to get worse before they get better. Other times, they just get worse. We'll find out soon which of those descriptions characterizes the collapsed Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

The negotiations were a determined effort by Secretary of State John Kerry and his special adviser, Martin Indyk, to create viable Palestinian and Jewish states. But despite Kerry's relentless enthusiasm, the two sides never really came close. They are further apart now than when the process began, with the mistrust even deeper.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas wanted a map of the territory that a Palestinian state would occupy. He asked for it when the talks began last July, and he was still demanding one last month when the talks shattered, with the United States pleading for nine more months of negotiations under an American "agreed framework." But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu would never deliver the map, probably because he wanted to avoid the political battle with settlers who would be outside the future borders of Israel.

The issue of Israeli settlements humiliated the Palestinian negotiators and poisoned the talks, according to statements by U.S. negotiators. When Israel announced 700 new settlements in early April, before the April 29 deadline of the talks, "Poof, that was sort of the moment," Kerry told a Senate panel. Warned Indyk at a gathering of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, "Rampant settlement activity - especially in the midst of negotiations - doesn't just undermine Palestinian trust in the purpose of the negotiations; it can undermine Israel's Jewish future." Abbas was also a huge disappointment. He effectively shut down as a negotiator midway through the talks, whether in response to Netanyahu's intransigence or because of his own unwillingness to make compromises. The high-water mark for Abbas was probably the beginning of the process, when he responded favorably to a security plan drawn up by Gen. John Allen, the retired U.S. commander in Kabul, who had been tapped by Kerry to propose arrangements that would protect Israel if there were a Palestinian state.

Abbas was "ready to put his state's security in American hands," Indyk told the institute. The Palestinian leader had accepted that his future state would be disarmed, but he had previously argued that after Israeli troops left the Jordan Valley - say, five years hence - border security would be guaranteed by NATO (a solution that Israel, mistrustful of the Europeans, opposed). Now Abbas had decided that the United States, Israel's closest ally, could control his airspace and land access in the future. U.S. negotiators saw it as a big concession, but Israel opposed that, too. Abbas's brooding turned to truculence. Kerry had gotten Arab League foreign ministers to support recognition of Israel as a Jewish state, a fundamental demand for Netanyahu. Abbas went to the Arabs and got them to reverse this helpful position. When the United States began laying down its agreed framework, with "bridging proposals" to narrow the gaps on the most contentious final issues, such as refugees and Jerusalem, Abbas never responded. Rather than accept the framework "with reservations," as planned, Abbas balked.

U.S. officials sensed that Abbas was in such a deep funk about "that man," as he privately called Netanyahu, that he simply wanted out. Ari Shavit, a prominent Israeli columnist for Haaretz, likened the process to the gloomy existential play "Waiting for Godot."

Israelis and Palestinians both attacked Kerry during the process. A low point came when Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Yaalon described the U.S. secretary of state as "obsessive and messianic." Netanyahu, who maintained a warm relationship with Kerry and often smoked big cigars during their five-hour-plus meetings in Jerusalem, seemed to have shown a hint of flexibility late in the process, offering movement on some core issues. But by then it was too late.

The question is what comes next, after the failure of this intense U.S. effort. The Palestinians are threatening to charge Israel under the Geneva Conventions that protect civilians in occupied territories. The Israelis may retaliate by cutting off money to Abbas's government and announcing new settlements. If this happens, Abbas says he will dissolve the Palestinian Authority - and insist that Israel take on the \$3 billion cost and endless headaches of governing 2.5 million Palestinians. U.S. officials don't think he's bluffing.

If these catastrophic developments ensue, Israel will find itself living with a one-state solution after all. Optimists think this might provide reality therapy, showing that Israel can survive as a healthy Jewish state only if a Palestinian state exists, too. But after this last exercise in frustration and bitterness, there aren't many optimists left.

OUR DISCONNECTED WORKING CLASS (WP)

By Michael Gerson

Washington Post, May 16, 2014

Much about the future health of the republic depends on Harvard sociologist Robert Putnam being wrong. Given the track record of Harvard social scientists, this might appear a reasonable bet. But, in this case, Putnam's diligence and thoughtfulness make for very bad news.

Putnam has spent much of his academic life as America's chief chronicler of declining social institutions - a dour task, cheerfully performed. In the 1990s, he began drawing together the disparate evidence of declining attendance at bowling leagues, church services and Moose lodges. His data points included the falloff in yearly picnic attendance and a rise in the incidence of drivers giving each other the finger.

It was the composite image of one of the most powerful forces of modernity: a rising individualism that "liberates" people from social commitments that make their lives orderly and pleasant.

Even worse, the extent of this trend is not distributed equally in society. Putnam's recent work - to be summarized in a forthcoming book called "Our Kids" - focuses on how the consequences of institutional decline are felt disproportionately among the working class, leaving vast numbers of youths disconnected from the promise of American life.

Upper- and middle-class parents are investing relatively more time and resources in the social development of their children than are working-class parents, at a time when such investments have never been more economically strategic. This widening gap can be measured in parental play and reading time with young children; later, in the engagement of older children in extracurricular activities. Suburban minivans are occupied in taxiing children to tutoring, sports, clubs, youth groups and volunteer activities. By these measures, children from working-class backgrounds are falling behind.

The problem is that early social connectedness is a strong predictor of later success in life - test scores, college attendance and income. So what Putnam calls the "youth class gap" is a source of deep (and perhaps deepening) social division.

Much of modern liberalism - recently inspired and incited by Thomas Piketty's book "Capital in the Twenty-First Century" - is focused on growing income inequality. And surely, at some eventual point along an unbroken trend of increasing returns to capital and diminishing returns to wages, the rich and poor will cease to be fellow citizens in any meaningful sense. But what is most striking about a disproportionate emphasis on income inequality is how distorting and distracting it is.

If income inequality is the main economic problem, it could be solved tomorrow, through confiscation and redistribution. If the main problem is the unequal generation of social capital in institutions such as families, schools and communities, the solutions get more difficult. One task can be accomplished by a tax collector; the other is the work of a civilization.

Putnam's analysis both illuminates the complexity of public policy choices and increases the likelihood that policy solutions could gain broad political support. His proposed explanations for the disproportionate decline in social connectedness among the working class are ideologically diverse. "Decreasing social mobility," he argues, "represents a perfect storm with multiple,

interrelated causes, such as [a] widening income gap and increasing economic insecurity for working-class households, changes in the working-class family structure, [and the] unraveling of the informal social safety net in working-class neighborhoods."

These arguments are rooted in observation rather than ideology. But they create the possibility of ideological consensus, or at least of ideological compromise. Proposals focused mainly on reducing income inequality require the political triumph of the left. Conservatives, being conservatives, will not concede leveling as a valid economic goal. But an agenda that increases the rewards of work, encourages stable, engaged families and promotes healthy community institutions could be a shared political enterprise.

Put another way, an abstract argument between advocates of economic liberty and advocates of economic equality can only be settled by victory for one side. The goal of building social capital can (at least in theory) be a virtuous competition. It might include a range of approaches: increasing the earned-income tax credit for single workers (who are often non-custodial parents); working to reduce non-marital births; promoting broader access to higher education; encouraging mentoring; increasing the child tax credit.

The goal of this approach would be to strengthen the social institutions - education, family, work - that strengthen social mobility. And this might have a chance of decreasing the polarization of our economy and the polarization of our politics.

SHAREHOLDER CAPITALISM VS. STAKEHOLDER CAPITALISM (WP)

By Harold Meyerson

Washington Post, May 16, 2014

Sometimes, a throw-away sentence, a passage not intended to make a major point, ends up telling us a great deal more than the author intended. One such passage popped up in a recent Wall Street Journal story that documented U.S. corporations' scramble to buy overseas companies and thereby shift their legal residency abroad to benefit from lower tax rates. The story noted that roughly 1,700 U.S.-based companies currently are holding \$1.5 trillion offshore rather than bringing it home and paying taxes on it. "But that," the story said, "has left the bulk of their funds for paying dividends or buying back shares effectively out of reach."

Actually, those funds kept cosseted abroad could be put to more uses than buying back shares or paying dividends if those companies brought them home. They might fund more research and development, or start a new product line, or even give employees a raise. But the Journal story has it right. American big business these days is in the business of rewarding shareholders (a group that very much includes chief executives), to the exclusion of any other activity that might help companies flourish. They're in the business of raising their dividends and buying back stock, a practice that effectively raises the value of outstanding shares. Such measures do nothing to enhance a company's long-term value. But long-term value is a diminishing factor in many CEOs' calculations, as they come under pressure from extortion artists - the euphemism is "activist investors" - who demand bigger dividends, and as the CEOs' own fortunes are linked to share value as well.

As The Post's Steven Pearlstein recently documented, 80 percent of the companies listed on the S&P 500 bought back their own shares last year, spending \$477 billion on raising share values by diminishing the number of shares outstanding. The S&P 500 spent 30 percent more on dividends and stock buybacks than they did on capital expenditures. Worse yet, most of these buybacks were funded by these corporations taking on debt. Indeed, of the \$3.4 trillion in debt that U.S. non-financial corporations have incurred since 2009, nearly 87 percent has gone to stock buybacks and dividend payments.

The next time a corporate CEO chastises the federal government for taking on debt to meet current expenses, tell him to clean up his own house first.

Shareholder capitalism in the United States has reached the point of absurdity. More than three decades ago, economist Milton Friedman argued that a company's sole obligation should be to its shareholders. But even Friedman didn't argue that companies should cut back on everything else or plunge themselves deep into debt just to raise their shareholders' rewards. Nevertheless, that - as that Wall Street Journal so succinctly illustrated - is what shareholder capitalism has become today.

That's why an increasing number of top business reporters and commentators have turned against

shareholder capitalism. Two years ago, writing in the Harvard Business Review, that magazine's editorial director, Justin Fox, and Harvard Business School professor Jay Lorsch argued that shareholders performed none of the three basic tasks that, theoretically, justified their claim on corporate profits: They didn't normally provide the companies with capital (which corporations usually get through retained earnings and borrowing), they didn't provide a barometer of the company's value (unless you believe that the share price is always accurate), and they didn't provide a check on management - save to feather their own nests. In a recent issue of the American Prospect, a magazine I help edit, The Post's Pearlstein delivered his own withering critique of shareholder capitalism. And last week, Martin Wolf, the chief economics writer for the Financial Times - the most venerable and respected journal for investors - argued that shareholder capitalism had become so dysfunctional that "we need to rethink ownership and control of limited liability companies" (that is, publicly listed corporations).

Wolf's point is that shareholders are far from the major risk-holders in the modern corporation. That distinction goes to the firm's employees, who have "firm-specific skills." And yet, Wolf continues, "employees have no voice in what happens to a company to which they might have devoted their lives, while the shareholder of ten seconds does."

The alternative model to which Wolf implicitly points is the kind of stakeholder capitalism that exists in Germany, where workers, and sometimes public representatives, take half the seats on corporate boards and have a real voice in company decision making. Changing corporate structure in the United States will require an epochal political value, but it's long past time that that battle began.

REIN IN CHINA IN ITS DISPUTE WITH VIETNAM OVER ENERGY RESOURCES (WP)

By Elizabeth Economy And Michael Levi

Washington Post, May 16, 2014

Elizabeth Economy and Michael Levi are senior fellows at the Council on Foreign Relations and the authors of "By All Means Necessary: How China's Resource Quest is Changing the World."

The China National Overseas Oil Corporation began drilling in Vietnamese-claimed waters last week, accompanied by more than 70 vessels, including armed Chinese warships. At first glance this might look like merely another front in China's quest for natural resources, which has taken Chinese companies to seemingly every corner of the earth.

Yet what is happening in the South China Sea is actually far more dangerous than what has come before - and the forces driving it go well beyond pursuit of energy riches. The United States needs to face up to the full magnitude of the Chinese challenge if it is to have any hope of successfully confronting it. This means not only tough talk but also a willingness to take difficult action.

There has long been speculation that massive oil and gas deposits are locked beneath the South China Sea - 1.4 million square miles bordered by Brunei, China, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam, and claimed in part by all of them. According to the Chinese Ministry of Land and Resources, the area might contain as much as 400 billion barrels of oil, surpassing the bounties of the Middle East.

Most informed estimates, though, are much smaller. The United States Geological Survey estimated in 2010 that the region's undiscovered oil (much of which will never be attractive to produce) totals a far smaller 11 billion barrels. It is difficult to believe that China would risk armed conflict for such modest stakes.

Two other forces are essential to understanding what is going on. One is nationalism: The drilling is taking place near the Paracel Islands, which sit within a disputed area of the South China Sea, roughly 120 miles from Vietnam's coast and well within Vietnam's 200-mile exclusive economic zone. But China claims the islands based on historical usage and effective exercise of sovereignty, having occupied them since 1974. Backing off from the Paracels would deal a blow to China's prestige, while underlining Chinese control over the islands would strengthen the leadership's legitimacy at home.

Chinese leaders are also motivated by a desire to control the sea lanes of the South China Sea. More than \$5 trillion of trade passes through the increasingly crowded waters per year. That includes almost one-third of world seaborne oil trade and more than three-quarters of Chinese oil imports (as well as most of the oil destined for Japan, South Korea and Taiwan). The Chinese navy may be too weak to challenge U.S. dominance in critical Middle East sea lanes, or even to

exercise control over the critical Straits of Malacca, but by operating naval forces across the South China Sea it can gain greater confidence that the United States will not be able to disrupt its supplies.

Beyond these two motivations, it does not hurt that Chinese oil companies are also eager to operate in the region. By cloaking its military excursion in commercial garb, Beijing might hope to defuse some of the inevitable opposition.

That gambit has not paid off. China's latest move, which came as a genuine surprise to Vietnam and other nations, undermines Beijing's insistence that strong relations within the region are its top foreign policy priority. It also calls into question China's commitment to its current working-group talks with Vietnam on joint resource development in the South China Sea.

The United States has said it won't take a stand on the sovereignty dispute, and has called the two parties to resolve their differences peacefully. This is not enough: The United States ought to call China's bluff and make clear the real stakes. The United States and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations should present a unified front in refusing to recognize unilateral assertions of claims in disputed territories.

Even more important, the United States must be prepared to give life to its rhetorical position.

Although it does not have a treaty obligation to defend Vietnam, its rebalancing to Asia is premised on its role as the primary guarantor of stability in the Asia Pacific. Chinese actions challenge that.

Vietnam has reiterated its commitment to peaceful resolution of the dispute. If China does not reciprocate, the United States should be prepared to offer support to Vietnam through an increased naval presence. This would give Washington the ability to assess Chinese capabilities and to help de-escalate the situation. Other options, such as restrictions on the Chinese oil corporation's activities in the United States, could also be considered. If the United States can't back up its words with actions, its credibility in promising to uphold peace and stability in the region will be gutted.

PAYING FOR YOUR FAIR SHARE IN AN APP-BASED ECONOMY (WP)

By Catherine Rampell

Washington Post, May 16, 2014

SAN FRANCISCO

"Organic." "Artisanal." "Community-based." "Social." "Local." "Fresh." "Natural." And the godfather of them all: "Green."

These words used to have specific definitions and usages before they were hijacked by businesses and brand managers wanting to connote vague warmth-and-fuzziness.

"Sharing" is now at risk of linguistic appropriation and buzzword-ification, too - in this case by the entrepreneurs of Silicon Valley.

This week I attended a conference here called "SHARE: Catalyzing the New Sharing Economy."

As I learned from my fellow attendees - and as you may already know from reading about taxi-drivers' scuffles with Uber or the New York attorney general's battles with Airbnb - the app-based "sharing economy" is vast and growing. It includes "home-sharing" (hosting strangers in your house, for money); "ride-sharing" (driving people around, for money); "food-sharing" (cooking for other people, for money); "closet-sharing" (giving away your used clothing, for money); "boat-sharing" (letting other people use your boat, for money); "book-sharing" (shipping off your old textbooks to needy students, for money); "parking-space sharing" (letting a stranger park in your driveway, for money); and pretty much every other kind of rental or purchase transaction you think of, but conducted through a decentralized network of "peers" newly haloed with the altruistic mission of "sharing."

One woman told me she had recently quit her job to manage Airbnb properties full-time and called herself a "home-sharer." I asked if providing lodging to tourists counted as "sharing" when she was charging them for this service. Isn't that just, umm, a hotel? Or maybe a short-term rental? Well, she said, it wasn't like she was getting rich like real hotels do (and so why should she have to pay hotel taxes?).

As you can tell from all my scare-quotes, I left the day's events thoroughly confused about what "sharing" really is in the modern age. So the day after attending SHARE, I decided to consult another group of experts on the topic: preschoolers.

After all, sharing is one of the main things they learn. And these were not just any preschoolers,

but preschoolers in Silicon Valley - at the Oshman Family JCC preschool in Palo Alto, to be exact - so they should have a particularly fine appreciation of the more contemporary, app-driven nuances of the word.

"Sharing is a really big part of their curriculum," one of the teachers assured me.

Notebook in hand, I confronted the chubby-cheeked Silicon Valley scions, my somewhat unfocused focus group. (Disclosure: My nephew attends this preschool. Rest assured, though, I interrogated his classmates with the same merciless objectivity as I would any other group of 3- to 5-year-olds.)

"What is sharing?" I asked, watching their expressions carefully.

"It's giving people a turn," offered a pint-size brunette. "It's giving stuff to people," said a fidgety little boy.

Okay, easy enough. That, of course, was the softball question. I asked a tougher follow-up: "Let's say you want to play with my toy, and I say, 'Only if you give me a cookie.' Is that sharing?"

"No!" the kids cried unanimously.

"What is it?" I asked.

"That's being mean!" said one girl. "Don't be mean."

I told her I wasn't sure she had it completely right; offering a toy in exchange for a cookie-based currency isn't necessarily mean. She then agreed it was more like a trade but was still pretty insistent that it wasn't sharing, nor was any other transaction where I got paid for giving something away.

At its most benign, calling things "sharing" that are actually no different from traditional commerce is just empty marketing. It might also crowd out other activities that used to be done for altruistic purposes (like donating your old clothes to Goodwill rather than selling them on the Internet, or offering a friend a ride to the airport instead of charging for the service).

But more perniciously, this semantic sleight of hand has been used to justify tax evasion and other kinds of law-skirting. Of course you shouldn't have to pay hotel taxes if you're just "sharing" your home! And of course you shouldn't have to submit to health-department restaurant inspections if you're just "sharing" your kitchen with paying customers every night! Or get a taxi medallion or commercial insurance if you're just "sharing" your car!

There's nothing inherently unethical about monetizing skills or capital that are otherwise lying fallow, and no doubt many of these new "sharing economy" platforms are helping some 99-percenters make money in flexible, rewarding, creative ways. But to call these activities "sharing" is an insult to the intelligence of existing businesses, regulators and 5-year-olds everywhere.

CLINTON GETS THE GOP TREATMENT (WP)

By Eugene Robinson

Washington Post, May 16, 2014

Republican panic at the prospect of facing Hillary Clinton in the 2016 presidential race has suddenly reached Godzilla-nearing-Tokyo proportions.

The election is more than two years away, and Clinton hasn't even decided whether to run. But none of this seems to matter to the GOP strategists and spinmeisters who are launching the whole arsenal at her - smears, innuendo, false charges. Already, they've moved beyond distorting her record to simply making stuff up.

As these damp squibs clatter harmlessly to the ground, it's useful to remember that Clinton has seen it all before. And I mean all. Anyone who thinks she'll be rattled or intimidated hasn't been paying attention the past few decades.

If anything, Republicans are succeeding in raising Clinton's profile and perhaps making her a more sympathetic figure. This was certainly the impact of Karl Rove's smarmy and unfounded recent speculation about her health.

In December 2012, Clinton, ill with a virus, fell in her home and suffered a concussion, spent three days in the hospital, wore corrective glasses briefly for double vision - meanwhile going back to work as secretary of state - and made what to all appearances was a full recovery.

Rove grossly inflated the episode to "30 days in the hospital" and "traumatic brain injury."

Appearing later on Fox News, he insisted that Clinton's health "is going to be an issue." The Clinton camp responded that "there are no words for this level of lying" and gave assurances that Clinton is in perfect health. But Rove's intent was clear: Fabricate an "issue," toss it out and see if

it sticks.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), an all-but-announced candidate for the GOP nomination, was even less subtle, claiming that Clinton's term at the State Department was characterized by "massive failures." He mentioned her inability to get Russian President Vladimir Putin to behave like a model citizen - something that no secretary of state, as I recall, has managed to do. Oh, and he mentioned Benghazi.

Benghazi, Benghazi, Benghazi. . . . Get used to that name, because you'll hear it a zillion times if Clinton runs. We've seen from her appearances before Congress, however, that she answers questions about the tragedy forcefully and well. I wouldn't bet my political future on the dubious prospect that she'll meekly go away if the Benghazi chant is raised to a din.

Given that Clinton's actual record at State is unpromising for Republicans to attack, there is now an effort to foul the atmospherics of her tenure. Most far-fetched is the suggestion that Boko Haram might not have kidnapped those nearly 300 Nigerian schoolgirls if Clinton had pushed - against the advice of diplomats, experts and the Nigerian government - to designate the group as a terrorist organization. There is no basis for this unlikely notion. Boko Haram has been on the terrorist list since November, and it didn't stop them.

If she runs, this won't be Clinton's first rodeo. It won't be the first time that bitter opponents have spun a false history out of whole cloth and tried to pin it on her. The paranoid fantasy over Vince Foster's suicide comes to mind.

The reason for all this panic is obvious: Republicans fear that if Clinton runs, she'll win.

Polls consistently show her beating all hypothetical GOP opponents, both nationally and in key swing states. New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie was competitive, for a time, but the George Washington Bridge scandal has sent his numbers south. Jeb Bush, if he decides to run - and manages to win the nomination - might have the kind of crossover appeal that would give Clinton trouble. But at present, none of the other frequently cited contenders seems much of a threat. Nothing is guaranteed, of course. You will recall that Clinton was supposed to steamroll her way to the 2008 Democratic nomination, only to have the junior senator from Illinois get in the way. In 2016 she might well face a challenge from the party's activist left.

If Clinton should get the nomination, her Republican opponent - no matter who it is - would be no pushover. But the possibility of electing the first woman as president would likely stoke the enthusiasm of Democratic voters to the point where the party's structural advantages - overwhelming support among minorities and women - come into play. Clinton might win big. Hence all the premature mudslinging, which reeks of desperation. Republicans hear the sound in the distance. They feel it in their bones. Stomp. Stomp. Stomp.

THE SOUND AND THE FURY - AND THE TWEET (WP)

By Charles Krauthammer

Washington Post, May 16, 2014

Mass schoolgirl kidnapping in Nigeria - to tweet or not to tweet? Is hashtagging one's indignation about some outrage abroad an exercise in moral narcissism or a worthy new way of standing up to bad guys?

The answer seems rather simple. It depends on whether you have the power to do something about the outrage in question. If you do, as in the case of the Obama administration watching Russia's slow-motion dismemberment of Ukraine, it's simply embarrassing when the State Department spokeswoman tweets the hashtag #UnitedForUkraine.

That is nothing but preening, a visual recapitulation of her boss's rhetorical fatuousness when he sternly warns that if the rape of this U.S. friend continues, we are prepared to consider standing together with the "international community" to decry such indecorous behavior - or some such. When a superpower, with multiple means at its disposal, reverts to rhetorical emptiness and hashtag activism, it has betrayed both its impotence and indifference. But if you're an individual citizen without power, if you lack access to media, drones or special forces, then hashtagging your solidarity with the aggrieved is a fine gesture and perhaps even more.

The mass tweet is, after all, just the cyber equivalent of the mass petition. And people don't sneer at petitions. Historically, they've been a way for individuals, famous or anonymous, to make their views known and, by weight of number, influence authorities who, in democratic societies, might respond to such expressions of popular sentiment.

The hashtag campaign for the Nigerian girls - originated in Nigeria by Nigerians - was meant to do exactly that: pressure the Nigerian government to respond more seriously to the kidnapping. It has already had this effect. And attention from abroad has helped magnify the pressure.

As always, however, we tend to romanticize the power of the tweet. For a while, Twitter (and other social media) was seen as a game-changer that would empower the masses and invert the age-old relationship between the ruler and ruled.

This is mostly rubbish. Yes, the tweet improves upon the mass petition because tweets contain an instant return address that allows for mass mobilization. People can be summoned to gather together somewhere - Tahrir Square, for example.

At which point, alas, the age-old dynamics of power take hold. If the tyrant, brandishing guns and tanks, is cruel and determined enough, your tweets will mean nothing. Try it at Tahrir or Tiananmen, in Damascus or Tehran. They will shoot and torture you, then maybe even let you keep your precious smartphone.

Michelle Obama's tweeting #BringBackOurGirls for the nearly 300 schoolgirls kidnapped by Boko Haram terrorists poses an interesting case of the semi-official tweet. This was no exercise in vanity. She does advise the man who does deploy the forces and who in this case provided serious concrete support - intelligence, reconnaissance, on-the-ground advisers - to help fight the evil.

What was peculiar about her tweet, however, was its uniqueness: It's the first time she's expressed herself so personally and publicly about a foreign crisis. And she was nicely candid about the reason: "In these girls, Barack and I see our own daughters."

The identity of the victims here - young, black and female - undoubtedly helps explain the worldwide reaction. Two months earlier, Boko Haram had raided a Christian school and, after segregating the boys, brutally murdered 59 of them. That elicited no hashtag campaign against Boko Haram. Nor was there any through the previous years of Boko Haram depredations - razing Christian churches, burning schools, killing infidels of all ages.

Nonetheless, selective outrage is not necessarily hypocrisy. There are a million good causes in the world, and one cannot be devoted to all of them. People naturally gravitate to those closest to their heart. Thus last week's unlikely sight: a group of congresswomen holding a news conference demanding immediate U.S. action - including the possible use of drones - against Boko Haram. These were members, like Sheila Jackson Lee, not heretofore known for hawkish anti-jihadist sentiments. No matter. People find their own causes. Their sincerity is to be credited and their commitment welcomed.

The American post-9/11 response to murderous jihadism has often been characterized, not least by our own president, as both excessive and morally suspect. There is a palpable weariness with the entire enterprise. Good, therefore, that new constituencies for whom jihadism and imposed Shariah law ranked low among their urgent concerns should now be awakening to the principal barbarism of our time.

Trending now (once again): anti-jihadism, a.k.a. the War on Terror.

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL STORIES:

MORE DELAWARE CHILDREN LIVING IN POVERTY (WILNJ)

Wilmington (DE) News Journal, May 15, 2014

The percentage of Delaware children living in poverty has doubled since the 2008 recession, according to a report that tracks the well-being of state youth.

The continued rise in poverty is disturbing because children living in poverty can suffer a disproportionate share of deprivation, hardship and negative outcomes in their education, health and general well-being.

Released this week, the Kids Count study shows 20.6 percent of Delaware children live in poverty. Although slightly better than the national rate of 21.9 percent, it's much worse than the under 12 percent rate of 2007 and continues to climb.

Janice Barlow, director of the Kids Count report, doesn't see the trend changing in the near future. "I'm a pretty optimistic person and I have hope, but I think it really will take people in positions of power who are making some decisions to really care about kids," Barlow said. "And more than just

talking the talk but actually putting their money where their mouth is and investing in children." The report, now in its 19th year, is designed to draw attention to the well-being of children and serve as a call to action. So far, Barlow does not see this happening as much as she would like. "I do see pockets of it happening. It's just not systemic yet," she said. Barlow did note Gov. Jack Markell's proposal to expand the home visiting program - a free program to help mothers and their families during pregnancy and after child birth - as one effort being made.

Story: Lawmakers OK Markell's urban rebuilding program

Story: Fast-food workers demand higher wages

Alexis Simms, a parent of three, was not surprised to hear some of the report's poverty numbers. "I can see that there are more children who are in need, more families who are in need," Simms said, adding she sees it in the school at which she works. "Hopefully now that this report came out, there will be more awareness and hopefully more people in politics ... will start trying to make policies that are going to benefit these children that need the help."

Children from low-income families are also more likely to experience poor health and to die during childhood. The state's infant mortality rate of 8.1 deaths in the first year of life per 1,000 births continues to be high and outpaces the nation's rate of 6.4 per 1,000.

The report points out that low-income children score lower on standardized tests and are more likely to be retained in grade or to drop out. Low-income teens are more likely to have out-of-wedlock births and to experience violent crime.

They're also more likely to end up as poor adults.

The report is not all negative. Some bright spots include a decrease in the state's low birth weight births, although still higher than the national rate.

In Delaware, 8.8 percent of children born weigh less than 5.5 pounds, while nationally, 8.2 percent of children are considered low birth weight. Low birth weight carries a range of health risks for children, according to the report. Babies who are very low in birth weight have a 25 percent chance before turning 1.

The state's teen pregnancy rates continued to drop too.

Just a decade ago, Delaware's teen pregnancy rate was higher than the national rate. But a few years ago, Delaware's teen pregnancy rate dropped below the national average and continues to drop at a faster rate. The most current numbers show the state's births to 15- to 17-year-olds at 18.2 per thousand, while the national rate is 19.1.

"I'm glad to hear that," said Golden Ford-Jones, director of the Delaware Adolescent Program Inc.'s Wilmington campus. The program serves pregnant and parenting teens and their families. Ford-Jones, who had not seen the study, attributed the reduction to more awareness in the state toward reducing teen pregnancy.

"There is a lot more awareness for students, for staff and agencies such as Planned Parenthood, Child's Inc. and even within the schools," she said.

But the poverty-related numbers were the most striking including the finding that for the first time more than half of students in public schools qualify for free or reduced-price meals.

"This is double what it was a decade ago," Barlow said. "It just keeps going up."

Sheila Davis, who was dropping her children off at the Latin American Community Center in Wilmington Thursday, said she's glad to hear the report highlights the need for food, especially for young children.

"It makes [people] more aware that more children are in poverty than what they may know because some of the parents may ... not want people to know that they don't have food to feed their children," Davis said. "Sometimes pride steps in the way."

The combination of risks is greatest for children who experience poverty when they are younger and for those who live in deep and/or persistent poverty.

A two-parent married household earns on average three times the amount a single-parent household earns.

"It's pretty dramatic," Barlow said. "Particularly children who are in single-parent homes are also very at risk for being at poverty at higher rates than those in married parent homes."

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Child poverty

20.6% of Delaware children vs. 21.9 percent in the U.S.

Teen pregnancy

The rate of girls ages 15-17 giving birth continues to go down 18.2 per 1000 in Delaware vs. 19.1 per 1,000 in the U.S.

Infant mortality

The Delaware rate is going up with 8.1 deaths in the first year of life per 1,000 births compared with the national rate of 6.4 deaths in the first year per 1,000 births.

Source: Kids Count report

Kids Count Report released and shows Child Poverty at double last years rate.

EPA SEEKS TIGHTER REIN ON REFINERY TOXIC AIR RELEASES (WILNJ)

Wilmington (DE) News Journal, May 15, 2014

The Environmental Protection Agency on Thursday proposed its first update in years for toxic air pollution controls at refineries around the nation, including a first-time fenceline monitoring mandate long sought by some Delaware citizen groups.

Federal officials said the measures, including new requirements to limit toxic pollution from storage tanks and open-air emergency incineration flares, would make a "visible difference" in community health.

In January, state officials removed an air monitoring device that had been placed on a utility pole on the Delaware City Refinery's property outside its fence as part of a citizen-led, state subsidized air monitoring project. Company officials said one of their security officers "questioned a local activist" about the device prior to the refinery's call to the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control for its removal.

Story: Soot monitoring device removed at PBF refinery

Environmental groups have long questioned the adequacy of DNREC's air monitoring efforts outside the refinery, pointing out that public odor complaints - sometimes miles away - often follow pollution releases despite company reports of "no offsite impact."

Earlier story: Fire, outage at refinery brings odor complaints

Story: PBF Energy first-quarter earnings triple 2013 mark

"The common-sense steps we are proposing will protect the health of families who live near refineries and will provide them with important information about the quality of the air they breathe," EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy said in a written statement on the proposals.

Fenceline monitoring results will be made public, the agency noted, adding that the changes should have "no noticeable impact" on the cost of products from the nations 150 refineries.

Sierra Club member Amy Roe said she is optimistic that the EPA will approve more-protective requirements for refineries, and said that state citizens "have encouraged the EPA to address serious deficiencies" involving emissions, reporting and community understanding on air quality issues.

But Roe also said she was concerned about regulatory loopholes and state delays in completing major permit review and public participation in decisions.

PBF Energy spokesman Michael Karlovich said Thursday that his company has not yet reviewed the EPA proposals. The American Petroleum Institute has opposed the changes.

"With this proposal, EPA adds to the list of new regulations impacting refineries that come with enormous costs but questionable environmental benefits," Howard Feldman, API director of regulatory and scientific affairs, said in a statement.

Feldman said the EPA "has already concluded the risks associated with refinery emissions are low and the public is protected with an ample margin of safety."

Lisa Garcia, an officer with the national environmental group Earthjustice, said that the public has a right to know what pollutants are crossing refinery boundaries.

"For the EPA to include fenceline monitoring and a fenceline air standard in today's proposal is a very significant step and a win for communities," Garcia said.

In 2012, PBF Energy's Delaware City Refinery ranked 28th nationwide among petroleum industry pipe and smokestack sources of benzene, a known carcinogen, and 73rd for leaks of the same toxic chemical from thousands of valves and other undefined sources. It ranked 29th the same year for releases of toluene, a hazardous pollutant and contributor to smog.

Proposals announced Thursday would include a requirement for fenceline monitoring of benzene emissions. Full approval would cut benzene, toluene and zylene emissions by 5,600 tons a year nationwide, and release of other air pollutants by 52,000 tons per year.

By comparison, EPA records show that Delaware City in 2012 released 9,302 pounds of benzene from permitted and controlled release points in 2012, and 2,332 pounds from undefined leaks. Delaware City ranked 39th nationwide across the petroleum industry based on its total toxic air release from pipes and smokestacks - 268,266 pounds, with another 9,245 pounds from leaks. But the site was the highest of any petroleum industry site in the country for pounds of toxic pollution discharged to water.

Final standards are scheduled to be released in April, after public hearings in Houston and Los Angeles.

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RAILWAY TRAIL PLANS UNVEILED IN LEWES (WILNJ)

Wilmington (DE) News Journal, May 15, 2014

Jay Lagree, an avid cyclist, used to ride his bike from his home in Rehoboth Beach, south along Del. 1 to Bethany and then north again.

But these days, he's shifted his daily ride to the network of trails that link Rehoboth and Lewes. "I used to ride Route 1," he said. "But it's more dangerous than it needs to be."

Lagree is among the growing number of resort-area residents who use the Breakwater Junction Trail as a link between the two coastal towns.

And Thursday, he came out to look at plans for a 1.5 mile long trail expansion - one that could ultimately grow to 18 miles and link Lewes to Georgetown - along state-owned railroad right-of-way.

That longer east-west trail is just a dream at the moment but state officials on Thursday outlined drawings for Phase I - the small section from Gills Neck Road to Savannah Road in Lewes. That phase, expected to cost \$1.5 million, would include a trail head with restrooms and 30-car parking lot near the proposed new Lewes Library. Eventually, it would provide a second connection with the Breakwater Junction Trail through the proposed Showfield residential housing development. Maps of the proposed plan were on display at the Lewes Library and state transportation officials and their consultants were available to answer questions for the dozens of people who came out to see where the trail would go and how it would look.

"Over all, I think it's a very good plan," said Lewes Mayor-elect Theodore Becker. "It provides good access and the rails with trails concept is widely used throughout the country."

The state owns the rail line from Lewes to Georgetown - a large right-of-way that includes the train tracks and roadbed along with green space on both sides. The plan, said Marco Boyce, a planning supervisor with the state Department of Transportation, is to carve out a paved, 10-foot wide trail along the open area near the tracks.

There is still train traffic on the rail line but it is infrequent and slow-moving, he said.

On average, three rail cars pass through Lewes once a week, at a speed of about 5 miles per hour, he said. The entire right-of-way is 66 feet, with plenty of room for a 10-foot-wide trail.

State officials envision the trail being used by people running errands, shopping and looking for an alternative to driving their vehicles, Boyce said. The trail will only be open to pedestrians and non-motorized vehicles such as bikes.

The plans on display Thursday were a first step. Public comments will be considered and final plans will be drawn starting in the fall. Meanwhile, state officials are looking for a funding source for the project. It is unlikely that construction would start prior to 2016.

Meanwhile, several of the people who came out to view the plans, live along the second phase of the trail. Many still have questions about access to the trail. In addition, some are concerned about security and screening.

But Thursday, many of them, like Nassau Gardens resident Tom Olkowski, joked that they'd be in assisted living before the trail expanded in to their neighborhood.

"A number of area residents have concerns and others are in favor of it," he said.

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LAWMAKERS OK MARKELL'S URBAN REBUILDING PROGRAM (WILNJ)

Wilmington (DE) News Journal, May 15, 2014

Gov. Jack Markell's plan to revitalize Delaware communities hit by urban blight, crime and

economic stagnation cleared the General Assembly after House lawmakers unanimously passed the measure Thursday evening.

The governor's Downtown Development District initiative, which creates as many as 15 Downtown Development Districts eligible for tax credits and other incentives, now awaits his signature. About \$7 million for the program was allocated in bond bill money within Markell's budget.

Since the plan's announcement earlier this year, community leaders from across Delaware have expressed their support and interest in taking part in the program, hoping to use the designations to turn around areas in need of refurbishment, new construction, beautification or redevelopment. Wilmington officials have said they'd like to identify potential projects as soon as lawmakers approve the program. One council member has said it is perfectly fitted for an initiative in the city's east side. The project would include the refurbishment and construction of more than 100 homes and beautification through the planting of trees and vegetable gardens.

Story: More Delaware children living in poverty

Dover city officials have said the designations could bring some mixed-used developments to the area and tackle vacant lots and buildings.

Rep. Donald Blakey, R-Camden, said he supported the legislation, but wanted to be sure the plan was a redevelopment initiative and not a re-gentrification plan.

"If Dover gets the shot, Queen, Reed, Kirkwood and New Streets are the streets that at one time were gentrified streets for African Americans that have fallen into disrepair," he said. "I want to see that recovered, but not people displaced."

Dover's city planning director, Anne Marie Townsend, allayed those fears, saying the city takes every step possible to ensure anyone displaced by development is connected to services for help. Municipalities have to apply for the designation, which would first be evaluated by the Cabinet Committee on State Planning Issues. Markell would make the final designations. The governor has said he hopes to release the first round of applications during the summer. The first round would designate one to three districts. Counties could not receive a second designation until all three have a district.

Investors would be entitled to grants administered by the Delaware State Housing Authority valued at up to 20 percent of their construction costs. An investment of at least \$25,000 is needed in a project before the incentives kick in.

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WILMINGTON TO BEGIN PAYING FOR ITS WATER USAGE (WILNJ)

Wilmington (DE) News Journal, May 15, 2014

Wilmington residents and others could have to pay more than their fair share for water because the city doesn't pay for service and takes too much from its utilities budget, council leaders said. Council President Theo Gregory and council budget chairman Bud Freel said the city should start paying for the water it uses, which could provide the utility nearly \$1 million a year. Freel also believes Mayor Dennis P. Williams, who is proposing utility rate increases for customers, is taking too much out of the water fund to cover claimed expenses for city services provided to the utility. The city, which isn't billed for its water use, plans to start paying into the water and sewer budget by the fiscal year that begins July 1, 2015. The payments that year will only cover 25 percent of that amount. Within four years, the city will pay the full amount.

Freel has taken issue with the city's plan to start paying its water bills next year, arguing payments should start sooner so ratepayers aren't covering all the costs.

"The city's got to pay its fair share of the water and sewer fund," Freel said. "We owe that to all our customers out there who pay water rates, and that's what upsets me."

Council President Theo Gregory said he agrees with Freel's concerns about the city delaying payment on its water bills. He said the current system could cause the water and sewer budget to take a hit in the future and see its bond rating drop.

"This process has to start. We want to make sure our water and sewer enterprise is fiscally sound," Gregory said.

Cleon Cauley, who was recently moved from Public Works commissioner to mayoral chief of staff, issued a written statement saying the city's timeline to start paying its water and sewer bills was set to give the departments adequate time to budget for the new charges. Other reasons he listed

including allotting time to evaluate the feasibility of stormwater credits for city properties. Cauley's statement said the city's payment into the water and sewer fund will soften the level of future rate increases.

Freel doesn't buy the city's reasons for holding off on the payments.

He said council members last year were told the payments would start this past January and then were told that the money would start coming in during the fiscal year starting July 1. Williams recently delayed the start again until July 2015.

"Why is it going to take us another year to do this?" Freel said. "You as a city resident, you don't get that option, do you? It has to be reciprocated."

The Finance Committee on Monday will meet to decide on whether to send Williams' proposed budget, property tax increase and water, sewer and stormwater rate increases to the full council.

Williams is proposing to raise water and sewer rates by 8 percent and stormwater charges by 7 percent, raising the typical customer's monthly bill by \$3.78. A typical customer pays approximately \$574 annually in water, sewer and stormwater bills, according to city figures.

The water and sewer rate increases will raise \$3.2 million, but will, in part, be offset by ongoing drops in water use. That means the total water and sewer revenues of \$46.2 million will only go up by \$323,000.

The stormwater fee increases will raise \$563,000.

Freel said he began pressing the city to start paying water and sewer bills two years ago because the water and sewer budget contributes some money to the general fund, the primary source of money for common city services such as police, fire and parks and recreation.

The water and sewer money that goes into the general fund offsets city costs to support city utilities, according to city documents. That means the water and sewer money pays for utility-related work of city employees mostly paid by the general fund.

For the fiscal year starting July 1, the water and sewer budget will pay \$4.9 million, or about \$500,000 more, into the general fund.

Freel said he finds the general fund's charges to the water and sewer budget a little troubling. He said the water and sewer budget's payment next fiscal year will be bigger because of extra spending from the city. Yet, he said he's not sure if any of that extra spending is tied to supporting utilities.

"You could have the budget of one of those departments go up because of the formula they worked, and the water and sewer fund will still be charged," Freel said. "It's a very difficulty thing to explain. I'm not sure I support the assumption it makes."

Freel said some of the rate increases can be tied to the additional money the water and sewer fund will put into the city's general fund next fiscal year.

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city plan

The city plans to start paying into the water and sewer budget by the fiscal year that begins July 1, 2015. The payments that year will only cover 25 percent. Within four years, the city will pay the full amount.

OFFICER'S GRIEVANCE CLAIMS NAACP PRESSURED CAREY (WILNJ)

Wilmington (DE) News Journal, May 15, 2014

Former Dover mayor Carleton Carey's decisions to select the city's new chief of police and deputy were influenced by the NAACP, according to claims in one of the grievances filed by five high-ranking city police officers.

The grievance, filed by Capt. Robert Scott, is among those claiming Carey violated employment and affirmative action policies and abused his authority by influencing the appointment of a deputy police chief.

The grievances, filed in early April, led to a \$300,000 settlement between the city and the officers. Carey resigned as mayor in late April after council members pressured him to do so.

Earlier story: Former mayor's police meddling to cost Dover \$300,000

Story: NAACP remarks 'not being racist,' Sussex Councilman Wilson says

Scott's grievance claimed Carey met with representatives from the NAACP in late March, several weeks after a Kent County Superior Court grand jury decided not to indict a Dover police officer

accused of police brutality during a 2013 arrest.

During the meeting, Carey placed a call to the department, requesting the "African American Demographic by Rank" for the department. He later called Scott asking him to verify the data, the grievance said.

Police Chief Paul M. Bernat named Lt. Marvin Mailey, the former head of the internal affairs unit and an African American, as deputy chief. The selection was made based on race, and did not properly consider other officers holding more years of experience or a higher rank, the officers claim in the grievances.

But both Carey and the NAACP deny the claims.

Carey said Thursday he did meet with the group, but it didn't focus on his selection.

The settlement requires the city to pay four officers - Capt. Tim Stump, Lts. Dan McKeown, Jason Pires and J. Eric Richardson - \$50,000 each by the end of May. Scott will be paid \$100,000, half by the end of this month, the other half in January 2015.

Lamar Gunn, vice president of the NAACP chapter in Dover, said Thursday that someone in the community needs to consider filing an injunction stopping the city from using taxpayer money to pay a settlement based on shoddy allegations.

"I can bet every dollar that I have that if he (Mailey) had complained of discrimination, he would not have received a \$100,000 or \$50,000 pay out, or how about a zero-dollar payout to avoid the cost of litigation," he said.

Gunn said he was not at the meeting described in Scott's grievance, but was involved and briefed on discussions between the parties.

"Mayor Carey is not influenced by the NAACP, please," he said. "That's a joke."

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MINORITIES WILL LIKE IT HERE (WILNJ)

Wilmington (DE) News Journal, May 15, 2014

Despite the recent headlines out of Sussex, most Delawareans think this state is a pretty decent place for racial and ethnic minorities to live.

Delaware came in tied for seventh with Nevada in a Gallup poll published Wednesday, with 87 percent of Delaware residents saying where they live is a good place for minorities.

The 50-state Gallup poll was conducted June-December 2013, with at least 600 residents in each state being questioned.

It's possible some of those 600 Delawareans polled then may want to change their answers now following the antics of a couple of Sussex councilmen Tuesday. The two, Sam Wilson and Vance Phillips, made a show of withholding \$100 grants from an NAACP youth group, saying the NAACP must be involved in discrimination because of its name.

But enough about Wilson and Phillips. We should not paint the rest of Delaware based on those two elected politicians.

After all, we could be in West Virginia. Residents of that state, which has a population that is 93 percent white, came in at the bottom of the list with just 73 percent thinking it was a good place for minorities.

Hawaii (who wouldn't think it was a great place for anyone to live) was at the top of the rankings at 95 percent. Texas, Alaska, New Mexico, Washington, New Jersey, Delaware and Nevada round out the top eight.

All have relatively large minority populations of one race/ethnicity or another, according to the report, but Delaware is the only one with a relatively high black population at 21 percent.

So congratulations Delaware. We may have our dumb and dumber moments, but overall, we should be #delaproud so many of us think this state is a good place for ALL people to live.

Related: 'Racists and bigots and prayer, oh my'

Previous: What makes you feel #delaproud

Share in the Only in Delaware conversation 24/7 on delawareonline.com. Contact Jeffrey Gentry at jgentry@delawareonline.com. Follow him on Twitter: @jeffreygentry

ASTRAZENECA AND JP MORGAN CLOSE \$44M PROPERTY DEAL (WILNJ)

Wilmington (DE) News Journal, May 15, 2014

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One of the most-watched office sales deals this year in New Castle County closed today, officials confirmed.

JP Morgan Chase is now the owner of a 58-acre slice of what was formerly part of the AstraZeneca complex on Concord Pike. The deal closed for exactly \$44 million, according to New Castle County officials who received paperwork this afternoon. The transfer tax brought \$660,000 to the county and \$660,000 to the state, according to the county finance office.

JP Morgan expected to occupy the offices beginning in early 2015, according to a statement released today by the company. Earlier this year the deal, and a \$44 million price, was reported by unnamed sources to The News Journal and the Philadelphia Business Journal.

The property will give Chase more room as it grows its Delaware-based employee base. At the same time, AstraZeneca has been trimming its workforce in the state, which led it to put offices up for sale last year.

"Delaware continues to be a great place to conduct business, and for our employees to live and work. Currently employing more than 7,500 in the state, we have added more than 1,200 jobs over the past two years and expect that number to increase," Chase said in a statement released today.

Chase now owns what was known as the AstraZeneca "south campus." The AstraZeneca property is split into a "north campus" and "south campus" by Powder Mill Road, with two bridges - one for pedestrians, the other for vehicles - connecting the two.

"The financial industry's recent growth in our state has created thousands of good jobs for Delawareans and has played an important role in our state's employment growth outpacing the national average," Gov. Jack Markell said in a statement. "JP Morgan Chase has been a big part of that growth. Its purchase of the south campus will ensure that this centrally-located property can continue to be an engine for economic growth and opportunity in our region."

AstraZeneca also sold a nearby high-rise formerly known as the Rollins Building to a firm run by the founder of Allied Bank. The Nemours Foundation recently started moving in to the building as a tenant in what has been renamed the Allied Bank Center.

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TASK FORCE PITCHES PROPOSAL TO CUT WORKERS' COMP COSTS (WILNJ)

Wilmington (DE) News Journal, May 15, 2014

Businesses could cut costs for workers' compensation insurance by a third under a proposal released Wednesday by a panel led by Lt. Gov. Matt Denn.

The changes recommended by the Workers' Compensation Task Force ask lawmakers to rein in premiums that businesses pay for the insurance. Denn and other state officials have argued that rate increases have spiraled out of control in recent years.

One proposal caps what Delaware's health providers can charge for treating job injuries and adopting a new fee schedule for services. The group, which includes lawmakers, labor and business leaders and health-care representatives, also recommended creating a new panel to help increase oversight of insurance carriers. Another proposal would consider replacing the representative for insurance carriers that participates in premium-setting negotiations with state regulators.

"If these changes are approved by the General Assembly and the governor, they will easily be the largest savings and medical costs of any type in the recent history of our state," said Denn, the task force's chairman. "It's our hope and our expectation that reforms of this magnitude will result in a real cut in workers' compensation premiums. That is something our business community

wants and that our business community deserves."

The changes, approved by the task force on a 19 to one vote, will be offered as legislation in June. One of two representatives of the Medical Society of Delaware on the task force voted against the recommendations because the panel rejected higher reimbursement rates for hospitals and stand-alone surgical centers that were built into the formula to bring medical costs down by 33 percent. Task-force members determined that nearly 70 percent of a businesses' workers comp bill is associated with medical costs. The Health Care Advisory Panel created a new medical fee schedule based on Medicare costs for individual procedures and caps the maximum reimbursement for any workers' compensation treatment, except radiology and surgery, at no more than 200 percent of the Medicare reimbursement. Radiology procedures would be no more than 250 percent, and the maximum compensation for surgery would not exceed 300 percent. The current fee schedule is not uniformly set across the board, Denn said.

The state's medical society said in a release that it supports the fee schedule, recognizing that "immediate action is needed to reign in" workers' compensation costs in the state. But the group cautioned that the cap should not be seen as the sole solution to the state's workers compensation problems.

"Setting caps on physician and hospital reimbursements represents, at best, a short-term remedy, as the underlying systemic issues have not been adequately identified or addressed by the Task Force," the release said. "We urge the task force to take a more measured, comprehensive approach to workers' compensation reform to assure the ongoing quality and access to care for our state's injured workers."

Representatives from labor groups and the state chamber of commerce who served on the task force praised the ideas.

"I know we have something that will reduce rates, but I know we will have to be back again," said Rich Heffron, president of the Delaware State Chamber of Commerce.

Associated Press Reporter Randall Chase contributed to this story. Contact Jon Offredo at (302) 678-4271 or at joffredo@delawareonline.com or on Twitter @jonoffredo.

FAST-FOOD WORKERS DEMAND HIGHER WAGES (WILNJ)

Wilmington (DE) News Journal, May 15, 2014

Dozens of fast-food workers in the Wilmington area left their jobs Thursday to take part in protests calling for an increase in the national minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour.

The protests, which occurred at the McDonald's at 700 W. Fourth St. and the Peter Spencer Plaza across from the city/county building, contributed to a nationwide call among minimum wage earners to increase their pay to \$15 per hour.

Similar protests occurred in more than 100 cities nationwide, according to the groups who organized the Wilmington events.

"This should have been done a long time ago," said Patrick Adzadu, who's with the Delaware Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers.

"America can't go hungry. Nobody wants to be on food stamps. We can't be working for people and not be able to feed ourselves."

Related: More Delaware children living in poverty

Adzadu said his group deals with minimum wage workers on a daily basis and helps them find food, housing and other needs.

While studying at Cheyney University in Pennsylvania in 2001, he worked at Burger King earning \$7.25, an amount he said is too low given the increase in costs and services.

"If they're still getting that, it's not fair," he said. "Even if they raise it to more than what it is now, it's a start. We're not specifically saying it has to be \$15. If they do \$10, then maybe raise it to \$11, \$12, maybe it's enough."

Business groups and small-business owners have argued that raising the state's minimum wage could cost jobs and damage the state's still-sluggish economic recovery.

Business lobbyists have said that the increased costs would come on top of higher workers' compensation rates, higher federal taxes to replenish the unemployment trust fund and the costs of complying with President Barack Obama's health care law.

They also worry that higher-wage earners would demand raises if lawmakers raise the minimum wage.

The workers who protested in Wilmington on Thursday came from at least a dozen fast-food restaurants, including Kentucky Fried Chicken, McDonald's and Wendy's, according to an official with the regional 32BJ Services Employee International Union, one of the groups that organized the protests.

Poll: Should the minimum wage be raised?

Locally, Philadelphia and New Castle County have each taken steps to boost the minimum wage for some workers. Beginning July 1, New Castle County employees who earn minimum wage will begin earning \$10.10 an hour, up from \$7.25 an hour.

Philadelphia voters on May 20 will decide on whether they want to allow airport workers and subcontracted workers who receive taxpayer money to earn at least \$10.88 an hour.

In January, Gov. Jack Markell signed into law a minimum wage increase for the state. The wage will increase by 50 cents, to \$7.75, on June 1. It will jump to \$8.25 on June 1, 2015.

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KULLMAN ARGUES FOR ETHANOL REQUIREMENTS (WILNJ)

Wilmington (DE) News Journal, May 15, 2014

DuPont CEO Ellen Kullman told an industry conference on Tuesday how important it is to renew the Renewable Fuel Standard, which helps the company sell its ethanol products.

Ethanol is made from corn, but DuPont has been working to produce and promote a next-generation biofuel, cellulosic ethanol, which is made from corn stover, or the leaves and stalks left over after the corn is harvested.

DuPont hopes to finish its \$225 million Iowa plant by the third quarter of this year. It will make 30 million gallons per year, to help satisfy federal mandates for ethanol blending into gasoline.

In 2007, the EPA set a goal of 36 billion gallons of ethanol planned to be blended into gasoline by 2022. This year, that number was scheduled to be 18.15 billion gallons, including an increasing amount of cellulosic ethanol. The EPA is reconsidering this amount.

Kullman gave a keynote speech at the 11th Annual World Congress on Industrial Biotechnology.

"Legislative and regulatory uncertainty has a direct impact on the growth of this industry," Kullman said. "If the EPA issues an RFS rule with increasing biofuels volumes, supporting a stable regulatory environment, our industry can thrive."

"So let me state clearly: the Renewable Fuel Standard works and Congress and the administration need to ensure its stability. This will bring a reduced reliance on fossil fuels, increased energy security, many more rural jobs and much needed environmental benefits."

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL EDITORIALS:

SUSSEX COUNTY NEEDS LEADERSHIP, NOT JOKES ABOUT RACE (WILNJ)

Wilmington (DE) News Journal, May 15, 2014

Sussex County Council members have a rather odd way of starting a conversation.

It is one thing to disagree with a group's actions, its goals or even its members. It is something completely different to make a fuss about an organization's name, especially an organization that has been around for more than 105 years and has been involved in some of the most important civil rights battles in American history.

Sussex County Councilman Sam Wilson managed to do just with the dismissal of the Lower Sussex Branch NAACP Youth Council's request for a small grant.

"What's NAACP stand for?" he asked in the middle of a council meeting.

A polite "no thank you" to the grant request would have sufficed. Instead Mr. Wilson chose to touch on some racial hot buttons, dwelling on the term "colored people" in the group's title and then later elaborating on an imaginary group for the advancement of white people and what a hard time it would have in today's world.

All of this was done in a mock innocent style so that any criticism of his comments could be dismissed as reverse racism. Of course, the NAACP was forced to explain its name and membership while Mr. Wilson's intended audience got to chuckle at his daring wit.

It is a way of starting up an argument and slipping out before the fighting starts.

Of course, if there really wasn't a wink-and-a-nod tone to his question "What's the NAACP stand for?" then Mr. Wilson displayed an appalling ignorance of American, Delaware and Sussex County history.

On the other hand, if he wanted to start a genuine discussion of racial relations in Sussex County today, why wasn't he more straightforward? Why didn't he actually engage people who see our society differently than he does? Why couldn't he enter into a genuine give-and-take conversation with people who are his constituents?

Why didn't he ask a question and wait for an answer instead of wiggling away?

Instead, he left the job of explaining and defending to others.

We are on the eve of the 60th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the famous school desegregation cases that involved Delaware.

As a society and a state, we have made progress. Yet racial disparities persist. Our economic system is undergoing such tremendous stress and change that many Americans are worried about social mobility and inequality, all of which exacerbate those racial tensions.

Now is a good time for a genuine conversation about our differences. Now is a time for a discussion of solutions, whether from the right or the left.

Now is a time for elected officials willing to lead, not just wisecrack.

SIXTY YEARS AFTER BROWN AND STILL A LONG WAY TO GO (WILNJ)

Wilmington (DE) News Journal, May 15, 2014

Saturday marks the 60th anniversary of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. Delaware was included in the *Brown* decision. It was one of the states, mostly from the deep South, that mandated racial segregation in its public schools, i.e., de jure segregation. In the infamous decision, *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the U.S. Supreme Court had upheld de jure segregation if the separate facilities were "equal."

The 1954 *Brown* decision declared de jure segregation unconstitutional. In the second *Brown* decision, in 1955, which focused on the remedy for de jure segregation, the Supreme Court ordered the affected states to desegregate their public schools "with all deliberate speed." Delaware, like many other states, focused on the deliberate more than the speed part of the order. In 1971, black parents in Wilmington, joined later by the Wilmington School Board, renewed a lawsuit filed in the mid-1950s to implement the promise of *Brown*, arguing the Wilmington schools had never been desegregated despite *Brown* and Court rulings. After years of contentious litigation, the Wilmington plaintiffs prevailed against the suburban New Castle County school districts and the state of Delaware. The Courts ruled the city schools were indeed segregated as a result of state action.

COLUMN: Delaware's role in desegregation

COLUMN: Teaching young people about *Brown v. Board*'s legacy

A single northern New Castle County school district was formed and the District Court ordered busing across city-suburban lines. In 1981, the single district was divided into the four northern New Castle County districts that exist today. By the end of the 1980s, Delaware was considered a national model for desegregated schools, and, later, Delaware was cited as one of the two states having the most desegregated public schools in the nation.

In 1995, after a series of Supreme Court decisions weakening the requirements for districts to be declared "unitary" and thus no longer required to implement components of a school desegregation remedy, the four districts and state convinced the Court to declare the districts unitary. With the passage of the Neighborhood Schools Act in April 2000, the districts had to assign students to the nearest neighborhood school or justify a deviation from this requirement based on hardship. Critics of the law vigorously argued segregated schools would be the inevitable consequence. Experience shows the critics were right.

In 2014, 60 years after the first *Brown* decision, many things have changed in northern New Castle County's public schools, but school segregation has returned to Wilmington. As backdrop, the demographics of the public schools have changed. The white percentage across all public schools, including charters, is 43.4 percent in the county while the African-American percentage is 35 percent, Latino/Hispanic 15 percent, and Asian 4.6 percent. White students are a bare majority in Brandywine and about 45 percent in Red Clay and only about one-third of the students in Colonial and Christina.

Outside of Wilmington, more integrated housing patterns and continued busing of middle- and high-school students into suburban schools has supported desegregation. African-American superintendents, principals and teachers are found in suburban as well as city schools. However, the city's schools - both charters and traditional schools - especially at the elementary level, have become segregated again, with overwhelming majorities of minority and low-income children. For example, Christina's four city elementary schools have 63 white students among almost 1,500 students. In the four inner-city charters, only 7 white students were counted in the 2012-13 school year out of over 1,500 students.

The causes of school segregation are complex. Housing segregation, more based on economics than race, plays a role, keeping many minorities in the city. Charters and choice have given both blacks and whites options that have increased segregation. Moreover, many people and organizations are concerned that limits on who can attend certain charter schools affect individual choice and accelerates segregation by race and class.

Should we care that school segregation has returned, at least in Wilmington, especially if some of this is by individual choice rather than by overtly racist laws? We believe we should. Success in our society increasingly will be for those who can participate in a multicultural environment.

Research has shown that teachers prefer to work in schools that are not segregated by race, economic status or limited in student academic achievement. No, an African-American student does not need to sit next to a white student to learn, but desegregated schools by race and class tend to ensure higher academic success for all students in attendance.

Many have now recognized that the United States will need all its citizens to succeed in school to remain a prosperous democracy in the decades ahead. Most significantly, Brown was as much about ending America's Jim Crow - a system which stigmatized and demeaned one race - as it was about improving educational opportunity for African-Americans. The Brown decision was not the end, but the beginning, of our challenge.

Jeff Raffel, Helen Foss and Joseph Rosenthal were all involved in the desegregation effort in New Castle County dating back to the early 1970s. They are also current or former board members of the American Civil Liberties Union of Delaware, which continues to work to fulfill the promise of Brown.

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VICE PRESIDENTIAL *NEWS CLIPS*

PRODUCED FOR THE OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT

TO: THE VICE PRESIDENT AND STAFF
DATE: FRIDAY, MAY 16, 2014 -- 6:15 AM EDT

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Online Version

BIDEN IN THE NEWS

Biden Cautions China In Its Dispute With Vietnam

[Associated Press](#), May 16, 2014

WASHINGTON — Vice President Joe **Biden** is conveying America's objections about China's behavior in a territorial dispute with Vietnam to the top brass of the Chinese military.

Biden met Thursday with Fang Fenghui, the military's general chief of staff. The White House says **Biden** told Fang the U.S. was seriously concerned about China's unilateral actions.

Biden told Fang the U.S. doesn't take a side in the territorial confrontation between the two countries over an area in the South China Sea. That's where China has triggered protests in Vietnam by deploying an oil rig in the long-disputed seas. One person has been killed, a Chinese worker in Vietnam.

But **Biden** says no nation should take provocative steps in the conflict that undermine stability and peace.

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Biden Refinances Mortgage But Obama Stands Pat

By Jeffrey Sparshott

[Wall Street Journal](#), May 16, 2014

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

Obamas Had Up To \$7 Million In Assets In '13, Records Show

By Jada F. Smith

[New York Times](#), May 16, 2014

The assets of President Obama and his wife, Michelle, were valued as high as \$7 million last year, according to a financial disclosure form released by the White House on Thursday.

Most of the president's income came from royalties on his three books and investments made possible by the proceeds. His memoir, "Dreams From My Father," published in 1995, continued to make the most money for Mr. Obama, generating between \$50,001 and \$100,000 in royalties, according to the disclosure form. "The Audacity of Hope," from 2006, earned between \$15,001 and \$50,000, and "Of Thee I Sing: A Letter to My Daughters," released in 2010, earned between \$5,001 and \$15,000.

Sales from Mr. Obama's books have decreased steadily every year since he took office as president, according to the disclosure forms the White House has released.

Treasury notes held jointly by the president and Mrs. Obama are their most valuable assets, worth between \$1 million and \$5 million. The forms only require the Obamas to list their assets and income in wide ranges, leaving it difficult to discern the exact amount of the couple's worth in 2013.

Vice President Joseph R. **Biden** Jr.'s publishing career earned him considerably less than the president's totals. "Promises to Keep," released in 2007, earned less than \$201 in royalties last year, according to Mr. **Biden**'s financial disclosure form, also released on Thursday.

The Obamas' 2013 tax returns, released in April, showed they paid \$98,169 in federal taxes on \$481,098 in adjusted gross income. The Bidens paid \$96,378 in taxes on an adjusted gross income of \$407,009.

The Obama administration was the first to publish financial disclosure reports online. High-ranking government officials have been required to release their financial information since passage of the Ethics in Government Act of 1978.

"Neither the president nor the vice president have any conflicts of interest, and their reports have been reviewed and certified by the independent Office of Government Ethics," Jay Carney, the White House press secretary, said in a statement. "We are continuing this administration's practice of posting these forms online here in the interests of transparency."

Obamas' Assets Worth Between \$1.8 Million And \$7 Million, Financial Forms Show

By Lindsay Wise

[McClatchy](#), May 16, 2014

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama held assets worth between \$1.8 million and \$7 million last year, including between \$1 million and \$5 million in U.S. treasury notes, according to financial disclosure forms released by the White House on Thursday.

The treasury notes were the First Family's largest single asset in 2013, but the Obamas also reported between \$70,000 and \$165,000 in income from book royalties, up to \$250,000 in a Vanguard retirement fund, and between \$200,000 and \$400,000 in college savings plans.

The disclosure forms show that the Obamas still owe between \$500,000 and \$1 million on a 30 year mortgage for their home in Chicago, Illinois, with an interest rate of more than 5.6 percent. The couple does not appear to have refinanced since 2005.

Federal law requires the president, vice president and other high-level officials to submit their finances annually for review by the Office of Government Ethics. The forms list assets in ranges of hundreds of thousands of dollars, not exact amounts.

Ethics officials did not find any conflicts of interest in the 2013 reports submitted by Obama or Vice President Joe **Biden**, the White House said.

Obama's Assets Estimated At \$2 Million To \$7 Million

By David Jackson

[USA Today](#), May 16, 2014

President Obama and first lady Michelle Obama listed assets valued at about \$2 million to \$7 million, according to a financial disclosure report released Thursday.

Vice President **Biden** also filed his annual financial disclosure statement and listed assets valued at \$276,000 to \$940,000, including a rental property owned jointly with his wife, Jill.

"The Ethics in Government Act of 1978 requires high-level federal officials to publicly disclose their personal financial interests," said a White House blog post by spokesman Jay Carney. "The public filing system serves to prevent financial conflicts of interest by providing for a systematic review of the finances of government officials."

Presidents and other officeholders are required to list assets, but the form provides wide ranges on the values of those assets.

In declaring "U.S. Treasury notes," Obama checked the box valuing them at \$1,000,001 to \$5 million.

In addition to various bank accounts, index funds and college savings plans, Obama declared royalties from his books *Dreams From My Father*, *The Audacity of Hope* and *Of Thee I Sing: A Letter To My Daughters*.

The asset ranges added up to \$1.95 million to \$7.15 million for the president.

The Obamas listed only one liability, the mortgage on their home in Chicago.

Obamas List Assets Between \$1.8M And \$7M

By

[Associated Press](#), May 16, 2014

President Barack Obama and first lady Michelle Obama reported assets worth between \$1.8 million and \$7 million for last year, little changed from their previous year's holdings, according to financial disclosure forms released Thursday.

The forms, required by law, permit public officials to list their assets in broad ranges. As a result, a precise net worth is difficult to ascertain.

The forms show the largest jointly owned assets by the president and the first lady were Treasury notes worth between \$1 million and \$5 million. While the value of their assets is certainly higher than that of most Americans, their mix reflects the financial demands of a 50-something couple with two daughters. Their assets include Vanguard retirement funds and college savings plans.

Royalties in 2013 from Obama's books, "*Dreams From My Father*," "*The Audacity of Hope*" and "*Of Thee I Sing*," totaled between \$70,000 and \$165,000. In 2011, they totaled between \$250,000 and \$2.1 million.

The Obamas also have a 30-year mortgage on their Chicago home worth between \$500,000 and \$1 million with an interest rate of 5.625 percent.

Vice President Joe **Biden** reported 2013 assets of between \$276,000 and \$940,000, including a rental property owned jointly with his wife, Jill, in Wilmington, Delaware.

Unlike the Obamas, **Biden** has taken advantage of lower mortgage rates and refinanced his mortgage last year. He listed a 30-year mortgage on his principal residence and his rental property worth between \$500,000 and \$1 million with an interest rate of 3.375 percent.

Biden also reported making \$25,000 donations to each of two Pennsylvania anti-domestic violence groups. The \$50,000 came from an award **Biden** received from the Pennsylvania Society, which honored **Biden** last year with its gold medal for distinguished achievement.

Last month, the Obamas released their 2013 tax returns and reported paying \$98,169 in taxes on \$481,098 in adjusted income.

The Bidens reported paying \$96,378 in federal taxes last year on adjusted gross income of \$407,009.

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As Author, Biden Distant Second To Obama

'Promises to Keep' '13 royalties under \$201

By Ben Wolfgang

[Washington Times](#), May 16, 2014

Vice President Joseph R. **Biden**'s success as an author pales in comparison to that of his boss, according to financial records released Thursday by the White House.

Financial disclosure reports for both Mr. **Biden** and President Obama, required by law each year, detail the investments and outside income for both men.

The documents show Mr. Obama continues to enjoy royalties from his three books. "Dreams From My Father" generated between \$50,001 and \$100,000 for the president last year, while "The Audacity of Hope" pulled in between \$15,001 and \$50,000, according to the records.

The president's other work, "Of Thee I Sing: A Letter To My Daughters," brought in between \$5,001 and \$15,000 in royalties.

By contrast, Mr. **Biden** made less than \$201 last year from his memoir, "Promises To Keep," the records show.

The president, vice president and other high-ranking government officials are required to submit the reports each year under the 1978 Ethics in Government Act. The act is meant to ensure no officials have financial conflicts of interest.

"Neither the president nor the vice president has any conflicts of interest, and their reports have been reviewed and certified by the independent Office of Government Ethics," White House press secretary Jay Carney said Thursday. "We are continuing this administration's practice of posting these forms online here in the interests of transparency."

The full Obama and **Biden** reports are available online.

Obama Lists Assets Worth Up To \$7.15 Mln

[Reuters](#), May 16, 2014

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

Biden Refinances, Gets Super-Low Mortgage Rates

[Roll Call](#), May 16, 2014

Vice President Joseph R. **Biden** Jr. refinanced his home and two home equity lines of credit in 2013, securing super-low mortgage rates that will save him thousands of dollars a year.

Biden was generally been among the poorer senators, but his family finances appear to have improved of late, judging by a review of his financial disclosure forms.

In 2013, he paid off a mortgage on his Delaware home with a 4.625 percent interest rate with a new, 30-year mortgage with a super-low 3.375 percent rate from TD Bank, which has a Canadian parent company.

The mortgage is somewhere between \$500,000 and \$1 million, and includes a rental property. Saving 1.25 percent on \$500,000 would amount to more than \$6,000 in savings a year, although after-tax savings would be less because of the mortgage interest deduction.

He also paid off two home equity lines of credit each worth more than \$100,000 and took out a new home equity line of credit worth more than \$250,000.

The old home equity lines featured interest rates of 4.49 percent and a prime interest rate, respectively.

The new home equity line features a super-low 2.75 percent interest rate and a 20-year term, also from TD Bank. That should save **Biden** thousands more each year.

Biden, 71, would be more than 100 years old when the 30-year mortgage is paid off, if it isn't paid off early.

Obama, meanwhile, continues to pay above-market interest rates on his mortgage on his Chicago home — 5.625 percent. We noted a few years back that while Obama had urged a massive refinancing program to bolster the economy, he hadn't yet taken advantage of low interest rates to refinance himself.

Obamas Diverge With Bidens On Mortgage Refinancing

By Mike Dorning

[Bloomberg News](#), May 16, 2014

President Barack Obama, who has encouraged homeowners to refinance their mortgages to take advantage of lower interest rates, hasn't taken his own advice.

Obama, 52, and first lady Michelle Obama, 50, are still making payments on the same mortgage they took out when they purchased their Chicago residence in 2005 at an interest rate of 5.625 percent, according to a disclosure form released today. The form also showed little change in the family's finances from last year.

Vice President Joe **Biden** didn't pass up the mortgage opportunity, refinancing the debt on his Wilmington, Delaware, home at a 3.375 percent interest rate, according to his disclosure form.

The average rate offered on typical 30-year mortgages fell to a six-month low of 4.2 percent this week from a 2013 high of 4.58 percent in August, according to Freddie Mac surveys. Borrowing costs are up from a record low 3.31 percent in November 2012.

White House spokesman Bobby Whitehouse declined to comment on the president's mortgage.

The disclosure forms offer an annual glimpse at the elected leaders' finances, showing the first family to be worth between \$2 million and \$7.2 million. That doesn't include the value of their Chicago home, which the real estate web site Zillow.com estimates at \$2.1 million.

In addition to his \$400,000 annual salary, the president received between \$70,000 and \$165,000 in royalties last year from his three books.

The only debt the Obamas listed was their home mortgage, with a remaining balance between \$500,000 and \$1 million, according to the form, which lists the values of assets and liabilities in broad ranges.

Biden, 71, and his wife, Jill, 62, are of more modest means, listing assets valued between \$276,000 and \$943,000, not including the vice president's Delaware residence. Zillow.com estimates the Bidens' home to be worth \$1.4 million. **Biden** lists debts totaling between \$630,000 and \$1.6 million.

The Obamas have placed their wealth in a politically and financially cautious portfolio.

The bulk of the first family's money is invested in U.S. Treasury debt. The Obamas have between \$1 million and \$5 million in Treasury notes, which have a maturity between one year and 10 years. They also listed between \$250,000 and \$500,000 in Treasury bills, which have a maturity of one year or less.

In addition to the president's pension from the Illinois state legislature, where he served as a lawmaker, the Obamas listed three retirement accounts invested in the Vanguard 500 Index Fund (VFINX), with a combined balance between \$300,000 and \$750,000. The funds mimic the performance of the benchmark Standard & Poor's 500 stock index, which returned 32.36 percent last year.

The Obamas have set aside money for college costs for their two daughters, Malia, 15 and Sasha, 12. They reported having between \$200,000 and \$400,000 in tax-advantaged 529 college savings accounts.

The Obamas also ended the year with a combined balance \$151,000 and \$365,000 in three checking accounts at JPMorgan Chase & Co. and Northern Trust Corp. The first lady has her own checking account; the president doesn't.

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Following The Clintons, The Bidens Cash In On Ukraine

By Innokenty (kes) Grekov

[Huffington Post](#), May 16, 2014

Perhaps Hunter **Biden** doesn't get his marching orders from the White House, nor does he carry enough swag to influence U.S.-Ukrainian relations. None of this will matter as the White House suffered another foreign-policy setback when Joe **Biden**'s youngest son joined the board of directors of Ukraine's largest oil company.

Joe **Biden** visited Ukraine in April, reiterating Washington's support for the interim government in Kyiv. It looks like Hunter **Biden** will travel there often to carry out his duties for Burisma Holdings, a leading Ukrainian energy company incorporated in Cyprus.

Companies operating headquartered in Cyprus have long been the butt of jokes in Russia and Ukraine, as money-laundering schemes prevail in those murky Mediterranean waters, allowing big-ticket oligarchs and minor crooks and thieves alike to operate their corrupt schemes with no oversight and very little transparency. There's a lot of Russian money in Cyprus, folks.

Hunter **Biden** is mainly known as a lawyer and investor, but he is also an advocate for humanitarian causes and even a HuffPost blogger. He also sits on the Advisory Board for the National Democratic Institute (NDI), a D.C.-based outlet that runs democracy promotion and civil society development programs all over the world, including Ukraine. NDI is chiefly funded by the U.S. government, and the Kremlin's contempt for organizations like this is well-documented: after USAID's forced departure from Moscow, NDI moved its staff out of Russia. According to senior State Department official Victoria Nuland, U.S. government's democracy programming in Ukraine, run through organizations like NDI, cost U.S. taxpayers 5 billion dollars since the fall of the Soviet Union.

The Kremlin must be well aware of Hunter **Biden**'s family ties (duh!) and NDI credentials. No matter what the White House says about the inability of Joe **Biden** to influence his son's work in Ukraine, the U.S. government has already lost this PR battle. Just as Washington is unable to persuade the American people that the United States has national security interests in Ukraine; nobody in Europe, Russia, or Ukraine will believe that there is no conflict of interest in Hunter **Biden**'s appointment.

There are more intriguing connections between Ukrainian oligarchs and U.S. elites. In February, the New York Times profiled the relationship between Bill and Hillary Clinton and steel magnate Victor Pinchuk, who was in frequent contact with Hillary Clinton's State Department, for more than a decade paid a hefty \$40,000 monthly retainer to a Bill Clinton-affiliated DC lobbyist, and donated roughly 13.1 million to the Bill, Hillary, & Chelsea Clinton Foundation.

Steelworkers in Pennsylvania and Ohio are vocally unhappy about this relationship, and American steel makers are currently pursuing a case alleging:

Ukraine – and by extension Mr. Pinchuk's company, Interpipe Ltd. – and eight other countries had illegally dumped a type of steel tube used in natural gas extraction, an industry whose growth has provided one of the few bright spots in the United States manufacturing sector.

The Clintons' involvement with Mr. Pinchuk and the appointment of Hunter **Biden** adds to the Kremlin's arsenal of weapons for the "information war" between Russia and the West, which the Kremlin is winning by a landslide right now. It's winning the real war, too.

4 Things In The Obamas' Financial Disclosure

[CNN](#), May 15, 2014

The president earns a salary of \$400,000 for his day job.

The Obamas were worth between \$2 million and \$7 million in 2013.

While about the same as the previous year, that's down considerably from 2010, when they were worth between \$2.8 million and \$11.8 million.

The financial disclosures use broad financial ranges, making more precise accounting impossible.

1. They own mostly Treasuries.

Much of their wealth – between \$1 million and \$5 million of assets – is invested in U.S. Treasury securities.

2. They don't pay the lowest mortgage rates

They pay a mortgage interest rate of 5.6% on their home in Chicago. That compares to an average mortgage interest rate this week of 4.2%.

3. Malia and Sasha don't have to take loans for college

They have between \$200,000 and \$400,000 stashed away in 529 college savings plans for their daughters Malia and Sasha.

4. President's books not bestsellers anymore

Over the years, most of the Obamas' wealth has come from the President's bestselling books "Dreams from my Father" and "Audacity of Hope."

However in 2013, a lot fewer books were sold. Royalties from those sales came in no more than \$165,000, a far cry from \$1.1 million in 2010, according to the disclosure.

The president earns a salary of \$400,000 for his day job.

Last month, the Obama's federal income tax showed joint income of \$481,098. They paid \$98,169 in total tax.

Vice President Joe **Biden** and his wife were worth between \$276,000 and \$943,000.

In 2013, they refinanced property and locked a lower mortgage interest rate of 3.375%, down from their previous rate of 4.62%, on their home which is worth up to \$1 million. The Bidens also refinanced a home equity loan rate down to 2.75% from 4.49%.

Fallen Las Vegas Police Officer Remembered At U.S. Capitol

[Las Vegas Review-Journal](#), May 16, 2014

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

Fallen Arkansas Officers Honored At US Capitol

[Arkansas News](#), May 16, 2014

WASHINGTON — During a national memorial service for fallen officers, Vice President Joe **Biden** spoke of the bravery of two heroes from Arkansas who did not hesitate when duty called.

With the U.S. Capitol behind him, **Biden** delivered keynote remarks to the mothers, fathers, wives, husbands and children of the fallen as well as hundreds of officers from across the nation attending the memorial.

In praising the fallen heroes, **Biden** recalled the bravery of Scott County Sheriff Cody Carpenter and Wildlife Officer Joel Campora who drowned while assisting victims of an overnight flash flood along the Fourche Lefave River in Arkansas last May.

"Jumping into flooded waters ... not one of them hesitated," **Biden** said.

He did not mention their names but there was no doubt who he meant — at least not for the widows of Campora and Carpenter in attendance at the memorial service.

“It hit really close,” said Amie Carpenter after the ceremony.

Rebecca Campora said she appreciated that **Biden** had taken time to get to know at least some of the stories behind the more than 100 officers who died in the line of duty in 2013.

“This wasn’t just a canned speech,” she said.

A National Peace Officers Memorial Service is held every May 15 at the U.S. Capitol to honor those who lost their life in the line of duty in the previous year. The memorial service culminates a week-long commemoration that also includes a candlelight vigil at the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial.

The names of nine fallen officers from Arkansas were added to the memorial this week — six who died in 2013 and three others. Sens. Mark Pryor, D-Ark., and John Boozman, R-Ark., also issued statements this week to honor the Arkansas officers.

Theresa Johnson of Clarksville was overwhelmed by the attention she and other family survivors received during the week.

“We were met at the airport with escort officers and then had a motorcade to the hotel. They blocked intersections and traffic would be stopped and there were officers standing and saluting. It was amazing,” she said.

Her husband, Larry Johnson, was director of the Fifth Judicial District Drug Task Force. He died last March after suffering a heart attack while chasing a suspect.

“To hear his name called today and see all these people I know he didn’t die in vain and he will be remembered,” Theresa Johnson said.

The nine Arkansans whose names were added to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial aside from Campora, Carpenter and Johnson were:

- Conway Police Officer William McGary, who died in February after being hit by an intoxicated driver while directing traffic at the scene of an accident.

- Sebastian County deputy Terry Johnson, who died in March in a car accident.

- Faulkner County deputy Hans Fifer, who died in April of a heart attack while trying out with the agency’s SWAT team.

- Fayetteville Assistant Police Chief Elmo Ritchie, who died in October 1968 after suffering a heart attack while attempting to place an individual in custody.

- Texarkana patrolman Richard Choate, who died after being shot six times by a robbery suspect in May 1922.

- Constable Will Dalton of Rogers, who was shot and killed attempting to arrest two robbery suspects in January 1891.

Fallen Arkansas Officers Honored At U.S. Capitol

[Fort Smith \(AR\) Times Record](#), May 16, 2014

WASHINGTON — During a national memorial service for fallen officers, Vice President Joe **Biden** spoke of the bravery of two heroes from Arkansas who did not hesitate when duty called.

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Thousands Of Fallen Officers, Including Jason Ellis, Honored In

[WDRB-TV Louisville \(KY\)](#), May 16, 2014

WASHINGTON, D.C. (WDRB) – It’s National Police Week and thousands of law enforcement officers have gathered in the nation’s capital to honor those killed in the line of duty. Newly added to the memorial wall this year is Bardstown’s own Jason Ellis, who was murdered in May 2013.

The 33rd annual National Peace Officer’s Memorial Service started at 11 a.m. and ended around 1 p.m. on the West Front of the United States Capitol in Washington, D.C.

National Police Week draws 25,000 to 40,000 people each year. Officers come from departments throughout the United States and around the world.

Thousands of fallen police officers were honored at our nation's Capitol Thursday, including Bardstown's own Jason Ellis.

It has been almost a year since Officer Ellis was gunned down, and while police still don't know who's responsible, his name has a permanent resting place in Washington.

With the U.S. Capitol visible behind him, U.S. Vice President Joe **Biden** spoke during the memorial service, acknowledging the bravery of the officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty.

During Thursday's ceremony, 112 fallen officers were honored, including Bardstown Police Officer Jason Ellis.

A Wreath Laying Ceremony will be held immediately following the Memorial Service at the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial.

"This is very humbling for us," said Billy Richmond with the Lexington Police Department. "This is, as sad as it is, some of the greatest satisfaction I personally think that I get being a police officer."

Ten of Ellis' former colleagues and friends made the trip to DC just for officer Ellis.

Bardstown Police Chief Rick McCubbin says seeing officer Ellis' name etched in stone is an honor – but it's heartbreaking. "Now that one of my own officers is on the wall and our officers are here, it gives it a whole new meaning."

McCubbin has been taking part in National Police Week in Washington for 25 years.

"I know many years ago when I first came, I told myself when I was a young rookie cop in Louisville, I said I will never will miss that because it just shows solidarity and all these men and women – over 20,000 are on this wall," McCubbin said.

While Ellis' family and friends will soon return home to Kentucky, they'll leave knowing there will always be a place to honor and remember him.

"This is the saddest fun you'll ever have, if that makes any sense," McCubbin said.

This annual National Peace Officers Memorial service has been held every year for 33 years on May 15th. The motto is never let them walk alone.

It's said their goal each year is to not have any names to read.

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Joe Biden On Campus Sexual Assault: Step Up. It's Time

[TIME](#), May 16, 2014

Vice President Joe **Biden** has voiced his opinion about the sexual assault problem on college campuses across the country, telling [TIME](#) that the White House wants to pressure university presidents to figure out a better way to handle claims of rape

Joe **Biden** is the Vice President of the United States

I believe that the vast majority of college presidents are right minded and like stockholders putting pressure on CEOs, the White House wants to put pressure on them to change. You don't want to be a school that mishandles rape. Guess what? Step up. It's time. Its absolutely time because the moral disapprobation of society is the most powerful tool for effecting change in the cultural norms that doggedly hang on.

House Silent On Highway Funding

By Keith Laing

[The Hill](#), May 15, 2014

The House is staying quiet in the debate over a new transportation funding bill despite a flurry of action by senators and the Obama administration.

Senate leaders this week unveiled a six-year, \$265 billion road and transit funding package bill that will be marked up in committee on Thursday morning.

Meanwhile, the administration is pressing for action after releasing its own plan for a four-year, \$302 billion transportation measure. President Obama and Vice President **Biden** both delivered speeches Wednesday to tout the proposal.

"If they don't act by the end of the summer, federal funding for transportation projects will run out," Obama said in front of the Tappan Zee Bridge in New York.

"There will be no money. The cupboard will be bare. And all told, nearly 700,000 jobs would be at risk over the next year — that's like the population of Tampa and St. Louis combined."

The House has stayed out of the fray, focusing instead on a recent agreement it reached with the Senate on a smaller \$8.2 billion bill to boost U.S. port and waterways.

Transportation advocates say it's time for House Republicans to get engaged in the debate.

"We're now into mid-May, and if the CBO is correct, we're facing an insolvency," AFL-CIO Transportation Trades Department President Ed Wytkind told The Hill. "There isn't a big vision out of the House and we need one."

Wytkind was referencing a recent projection from the Congressional Budget Office that the trust fund that is used to pay for road and transit will run out of money by the end of this summer.

The labor leader said the House's inactivity is dampening an otherwise positive week for the funding push.

"The administration is clearly all in, not only on having a bill, but they're using the powerful voices of the president, the vice-president and the [Transportation] secretary to go around the country taking the case to voters," Wytkind said.

Wytkind noted there are big differences between Obama's transportation proposal and the Senate's, including the fact that the president is calling for lawmakers to spend approximately \$25 billion per year more on road and transit projects than the upper chamber is suggesting.

But Wytkind said he was glad the Senate was staking out a position.

"The Senate is finally doing a bill, but it doesn't reflect the administration's priorities because the administration's bill is a significant expansion," he said. "The Senate bill is just adjusted for inflation. It's basically a flat line bill. If combine those two facts, I think it's time for the House to get moving and hopefully they can come up with something big."

The key figure in the House is Rep. Bill Shuster (R-Pa.), the chairman of the Transportation Committee. Shuster is facing his primary on Thursday, and is working to fend off a challenge from businessman Art Halvorson, who has attacked his past work on pricey transportation bills.

Shuster is expected to survive the primary, but transportation advocates are worried that too much time has been lost to pass a large bill before the projected bankruptcy date for the Highway Trust Fund.

"Certainly, I would like to see the House come up with something because my expectation is that whenever Shuster does come up with something, he's going to have a very different perspective [than Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Chairman Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.)]," said Joshua Schank, who is president of the independent Eno Center for Transportation in Washington.

Schank said he had "no doubt" that Shuster wants to pass a significant transportation bill during his tenure as House Transportation Committee Chairman. Shuster's father once held the same position in Congress.

But Schank said Shuster is unlikely to go along with anything similar to Boxer's plan.

"It's my impression that he had the intention of making an imprint when he took the [Transportation Committee] chairmanship," Schank said. "I don't think his goal is just 'let's pass another six years of MAP-21, which basically what Boxer is proposing.'"

Shuster's office declined to comment on the highway bill, pointing instead to the upcoming vote on final passage of the port and waterways measure.

Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) has said that the lower chamber is waiting to identify a funding mechanism to help pay for transportation projects before it releases a draft of its bill.

The traditional source for transportation funding has been the federal gas tax, which is now set at 18.4 cents-per-gallon. The gas tax has not been increased since 1993, however, and infrastructure expenses are now outpacing receipts by about \$16 billion per year.

The gas tax brings in approximately \$34 billion per year, but the current transportation bill includes more than \$50 billion in road and transit spending. Transportation advocates have said the current funding level is the bare minimum that can be spent to maintain the nation's infrastructure.

The CBO has projected that lawmakers will have to find \$100 billion in revenue, in addition to the gas tax funding, to approve a new six-year transportation bill this year.

Transportation advocates have pushed for a bill that lasts for at least six years because lawmakers approved only a two-year measure in 2012 that is expiring in the fall.

Senators this week said their \$265 billion transportation bill would last six years, but have not yet decided how to pay for it.

Real Reason For Biden Visit: Editorial Cartoon

[Cleveland Plain Dealer](#), May 16, 2014

CLEVELAND, Ohio – Vice President Joe **Biden** made a rapid stop in Cleveland Wednesday to make a pitch for expanded federal spending on transportation infrastructure.

RTA's Little Italy-University Circle Red Line station is one of several Ohio projects that have been funded with grants from the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery program. TIGER is part of the temporary 2009 economic stimulus package.

The Obama administration is on a road trip, highlighting projects like the Little Italy station, because Republican house members in Congress want to reduce the TIGER program funding and restrict spending to roads, bridges and highways. The Obama administration and Democrats in Congress want to keep the program all inclusive with rail, expand it, and make it permanent by merging TIGER with the Transportation Reauthorization Act.

This week in Clevelantis, **Biden** would likely have no problem finding bipartisan support if he was seeking expanded federal funding for storm sewer infrastructure and the construction of Arks.

Biden Urges Infrastructure Spending During Trip To Cleveland

[Twinsburg Bulletin](#), May 15, 2014

Cleveland – President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe **Biden** are traveling the country saying the nation needs to invest billions of federal dollars in highways and bridges, but some Ohio city officials are left to wonder: Where's the money to fix our streets?

Making the pitch May 14 at a rail car repair shop in Cleveland, **Biden** said such investment is necessary for the U.S. to remain a pre-eminent economic force.

"Those in Congress who lack vision say we can't afford to make these investments," he said. "How can we not afford to make these investments?"

Biden was in Cleveland to highlight federal investment in a \$17.5 million new light rail station that will open in 2015. The president was in New York City, where the federal government has provided a \$1.6 billion loan to rebuild the Tappan Zee Bridge. Their message is that more money needs to be spent on infrastructure.

City officials in Ohio wish that a small share of those billions would trickle down to them for maintenance. Some Ohio cities are operating on the thinnest of margins as costs rise, tax receipts fall and state funding is reduced. Federal and state governments pay the lion's share of big road and interstate projects, but routine maintenance of surface streets is typically left to cities to pay.

Police and firefighters must continue to be paid, so budget items like street resurfacing are the first to be trimmed, said Paul Barnett, public works manager for the city of Akron.

Akron will spend about \$2 million on street resurfacing this year but needs to spend at least \$8 million to keep pace, Barnett said. The city will resurface only 11 of its 2,400 lane miles this year.

"It's OK if you plan on resurfacing your streets once every 30 years," he said.

Cleveland will spend \$4.4 million. Toledo has upped its resurfacing budget to \$1 million compared with \$600,000 in 2013.

Toledo bought a machine so workers could replace entire stretches of pothole-pocked roadway, said Dave Welch, Toledo's commissioner of streets, bridges and harbor. "There are roads that are pothole patch after pothole patch," Welch said

The inability to properly maintain streets is a problem in smaller cities as well. In Euclid, Mayor Bill Cervenik said the federal government needs to step in.

"I certainly believe the federal government has to take a look at communities like ours and understand the problems we're having and put together policies that help those communities that are built and aging and fix them," Cervenik said.

Did Biden Post A Campaign Video To WhiteHouse.gov?

[WISN-AM Milwaukee](#), May 16, 2014

Quick, someone alert John Chisholm so he can convene a John Doe Investigation into this obvious use of government resources for campaign activity!

If You're Reading This, You Did Not Buy Joe Biden's Book

By Jim Treacher

[Daily Caller](#), May 16, 2014

It may seem baffling that a sitting Vice President of the United States can't sell any books, until you consider that Joe **Biden** is a complete buffoon and everybody knows it. Why the hell would they want to buy a book with his name on it, unless it comes from The Onion?

Also, his boss has really screwed everything up, and that reflects badly on **Biden**. It's going to reflect badly on any Democrat who runs in 2016. You'll be able to measure this by the number of desperate MSM puff pieces about how great they are.

Their panic is only beginning to spiral. After November, their behavior will make the last 5 years look like the most uplifting episodes of The West Wing. They are on the brink of insanity, and I can't wait to watch them plunge into the abyss as Election 2016 looms.

America is tired of you, Democrats. Enjoy this time of relative peace and quiet while you can. As ye sow, so shall ye reap. And you've done a hell of a lot of sowin'.

From P. Diddy To Biden To Tiger Woods' Ex, Celebrities Open Up To College Grads

By Eun Kyung Kim

[Today Show Online](#), May 16, 2014

Sean "Puff Daddy" Combs received an honorary doctorate in humanities from Howard University, where he delivered the May 10 commencement speech.

Ah, college graduation season: That time of year when famous celebrities and politicians don caps and gowns to dispense pearls of wisdom to thousands of college graduates across the country.

This year's commencement season has mainly drawn attention for a string of high-profile speakers who backed out of ceremonies under a cloud of controversy. Among the notable cancellations: Christine Lagarde, managing director of the International Monetary Fund, and former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, both of whom withdrew in the wake of student protests.

Those headlines have partially deflected attention away from dozens of other speakers whose words have already inspired newly minted grads — and the dozens more who will do so over the next several weeks. Here are some highlights:

Sean 'Puff Daddy' Combs

Howard University gave an honorary doctorate to its former student, Sean "Puff Daddy/Puffy/P. Diddy" Combs, who also was the school's commencement speaker.

Combs left college before getting his degree, a decision he said he questioned many times at board room meetings he attended early in his music career.

"If I didn't leave school early, I would have been more prepared," he told Howard's Class of 2014 on May 10.

Combs described a dark period in his life when, as many of his friends graduated from Howard, he got fired from a job just weeks away from becoming a father.

"One day, you're going to be sitting in the dark like I was, thinking, 'What am I going to do?' In that moment, I want you to remember the power in you," he told the crowd.

"Nobody is going to take you to the front of the line — you need to push to the front of the line," he said.

Elin Nordegren

Real-life experience helped Elin Nordegren earn the "outstanding graduating senior" award bestowed upon her by Rollins College, where she graduated with a psychology degree and a 3.96 grade point average.

Handout / Getty Images

Elin Nordegren, the ex-wife of Tiger Woods, poses after receiving the Outstanding Graduating Senior Award for the Class of 2014 during her May 10 graduation from Rollins College.

In a rare public appearance, the ex-wife of Tiger Woods teed off about her former husband during a commencement address without ever mentioning the golf legend's name. Instead, she joked about how far she has come since the fall of 2005, when she first enrolled in the Winter Park, Fla., school.

"I was 25 years old. I had just recently moved to America. I was married without children," Nordegren told her fellow graduates. "Today, nine years later, I'm a proud American, and I have two beautiful children — but I'm no longer married."

Nordegren divorced Woods after learning in 2009 about his series of adulterous affairs. She reportedly received more than \$100 million in the settlement and, years later, she can laugh about that tumultuous time.

"It was right after I had taken communication and the media. I was unexpectedly thrust into the media limelight," she said.

"And I probably should have taken more notes in that class."

Rick Mastracchio

The commencement speech given by NASA spaceman Rick Mastracchio to University of Connecticut graduates was far out. Literally.

The astronaut spoke to the university's School of Engineering grads while floating, at times upside down, inside the International Space Station, 360 miles above Earth.

"I was trying to figure out how to make this speech different than all the other commencement addresses that are given each year," Mastracchio said. "And then I realized, I'm in a weightless environment. So maybe I should give the speech in a different orientation."

Mastracchio said he probably has "the best job on, and off, the planet." But he also spoke about the perseverance he needed to land that job: He sent in applications for nine years before finally getting accepted into the nation's elite space program.

"I wasn't just sending in an application and crossing my fingers. I was working on things to improve my chances," said Mastracchio, whose May 10 speech came just days before he returned to Earth, ending his six-month mission aboard the Space Station.

At night, he took classes to earn a second master's degree. On weekends, he worked toward getting his pilot's license.

"You become an astronaut the same way you accomplish any goal — through hard work and perseverance," he told the graduates. "Everyone has goals, dreams and wishes, but not everybody wants to do the daily work it takes to reach their goals."

U.S. astronaut Rick Mastracchio delivered a speech to University of Connecticut engineering graduates.

Upcoming celebrity speeches

The weeks ahead will include commencement addresses by former U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords and her husband, Mark Kelly, to graduates of Bard College on May 25, and Oprah Winfrey to Harvard University grads on May 30. Bill and Melinda Gates will speak at Stanford's commencement ceremony on June 15.

Coming up this weekend on May 17, fashion designer Tory Burch is scheduled to address Babson College, while Bill Nye the Science Guy is slated to speak to graduates of University of Massachusetts-Lowell.

President Barack Obama also will deliver a commencement address, speaking to Morehouse College's class of 2014 on Saturday. Just a week earlier, both the vice president and first lady gave graduation speeches of their own.

Joe **Biden** spoke at the University of South Carolina, warning students, "do not listen to the cynics" who doubt their potential.

First lady Michelle Obama, meanwhile, urged graduates of Dillard University to stay hungry for education, even after graduation, because it will inspire the "next generation of geniuses."

"Imagine the impact you will make," she said. "You have no excuses to stand on the sidelines. Education is still the key to real and lasting freedom. It's up to us to cultivate that hunger for education in those coming after us."

Russia Pours Scorn On News Of Hunter Biden's New Job

[TIME](#), May 16, 2014

The news that Vice President Joe **Biden's** son Hunter had taken a job with the Ukrainian gas company Burisma has been met in Russia with malicious glee. "Ahaha," tweeted Member of Parliament Alexander Sidyakin, reacting to the White House statement that there was no conflict of interest after the news of Hunter **Biden's** new role was made public on Tuesday. "Joe **Biden** is a good dad – took the trouble of going across the ocean to secure a job for his son," the pro-Kremlin website politrussia.ru commented in its Twitter feed, referring to Vice President's recent trip to Ukraine.

Rossiya TV channel's commentator Andrey Arkhipov said the appointment was "in line with Washington's plan to gain control over global energy resources." Dubbing Joe **Biden** "the curator of the military coup in Ukraine" – a reference to the ousting of pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovich in February following months of public protests – Arkhipov ridiculed the idea that no U.S. lobbying was involved in the appointment.

Top TV and radio anchor Vladimir Solovyov speculated about the fact that Burisma owned licenses for shale gas deposits in the areas of eastern Ukraine, where armed conflict between government forces and separatist insurgents is now flaring. "Let me remind you what the U.S. keeps telling Europe: Reject Russian gas. We'll provide as much gas as you need. We have shale gas technology," he said, without developing his conspiracy theory any further. Ukraine's and Europe's dependence on Russian gas supplies is a major factor in the Ukrainian geopolitical equation.

Russian media has been picturing Joe **Biden** as the Ukrainian government's puppeteer ever since last month's visit, which was aimed at demonstrating American support for the interim Ukrainian government. While in Kiev, **Biden** was filmed taking the chairperson's seat at a meeting with Ukrainian ministers. That footage featured prominently in Russian TV bulletins as an illustration of Ukraine allegedly turning into a U.S. colony.

The incident prompted a vitriolic comment by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, who said that "Joe **Biden** was conducting a meeting with the Ukrainian leadership essentially in the capacity of the head of state, presiding over the table, with Ukrainian officials on his side."

Jill Biden To Speak At Villanova Commencement

[Philadelphia Inquirer](#), May 16, 2014

VILLANOVA Jill **Biden**, a lifelong educator and the wife of Vice President **Biden**, is scheduled to be the commencement speaker at Villanova University's graduation on Friday.

Jill **Biden**, who earned a master's of arts in English from Villanova in 1991 before receiving a doctorate in education from the University of Delaware, will be awarded an honorary doctor of humanities degree.

Biden, who grew up in Willow Grove, started her education career teaching English and reading in high schools for 13 years. Since 2009, she has been a professor of English at Northern Virginia Community College.

As second lady, **Biden** has worked to emphasize the critical role of community colleges in creating America's workforce. She recently traveled across the country as part of the "Community College to Career" tour to highlight industry partnerships between community colleges and employers. In 2010, she hosted the first White House Summit on Community Colleges with President Obama.

She is also active in supporting military families, and started the **Biden** Breast Health Initiative in Delaware, which over the last 21 years has educated more than 10,000 high school girls about the importance of early detection of breast cancer.

– Kathy Boccella

CUSD 201 Teacher Turns White House Visit Into New Lesson Plan

[Downers Grove \(IL\) Suburban Life](#), May 11, 2014

WESTMONT – Westmont Junior High School teacher Nancy Bartosz continues to use her travels as an educational tool.

A CUSD 201 employee of 20 years, Bartosz, 43, of Chicago, spent a year traveling around the world in 2012 before resuming her teaching career with the district and incorporating her stories in lesson plans.

"I think it's important to use real world experiences when teaching students," she said. "My mission is to engage the community and build global connections for our youth."

On May 7, Bartosz, now an eighth grade literacy teacher at the junior high, was one of 22 educators who spent the day at the White House participating in a conference for National Teacher's Appreciation Week.

The week before the event, Bartosz filled out an application after seeing a Facebook post by the U.S. Department of Education. Within days, she was notified of her acceptance and boarded a plane to Washington D.C. on May 6.

"It was a straightforward application process, but I think my responses stood out because of my travels, my digital footprint and the different roles that I have taken on at the junior high and high school," she said.

During the White House Social event, guests met national leaders and policy makers, including Second Lady Jill **Biden** and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, for roundtable discussions on educational excellence and student preparedness.

Attendees were required to live Tweet the events using the "WHSocial" hashtag and capture their experiences on other social media sites such as Instagram, Pinterest and Facebook.

Bartosz shared her trip the Twitter handle, @Westmont8th, and her timeline was projected in the junior high commons area for all to see. She also corresponded with multiple students, who intermittently tweeted at her throughout the day.

After watching President Barack Obama board the Marine One helicopter, the group proceeded to a conference room in the Eisenhower executive office building, where Jill **Biden** led a discussion about the Joining Forces Initiative and the children's book that she authored, "Don't Forget, God Bless Our Troops."

"I really enjoyed hearing the experiences of Dr. **Biden** – I think all the teachers did," Bartosz said. "She is a lifelong educator and still teaches at the community college. She has a very warm, lovely personality and was very easy to relate to."

The speakers also detailed various professional learning opportunities that are readily available for teachers. Afterwards, Bartosz said she plans to look up upcoming summer education camp.

"Ed camps provide a place where teachers can learn how to make schools less administration centered and more teacher centered," she said. "I also learned about Maker Affairs, which focus on technology, science math and inventing. It would be nice to bring those skills back to the community."

Bartosz's students will also benefit from her trip to the white house, as she plans to incorporate everything she learned into various eighth grade lesson plans.

"For me, the most powerful message that I can take back to my students relates to their digital footprint," she said. "During the conference, we talked about how to represent yourself online. Not only is it important to be aware of the negative uses of social media, but also the positive ways kids can cultivate a digital footprint."

"I was also blown away by the amount of young professionals and students that work at the White House. They are no different than students that might graduate from this district. Since returning I have told my classes that if there is something you want, apply for it, because you never know what might happen."

Get to know Nancy Bartosz

What: Eighth grade literacy teacher at Westmont Junior High School

Age: 43

Residence: Chicago

Learn more about White House initiatives and socials at www.whitehouse.gov/blog

NEW YORK TIMES AND WASHINGTON POST OP-EDS

Searching For Fairness On The Internet

By Editorial Board, New York Times Editorial Board

[New York Times](#), May 16, 2014

After weeks of being criticized for a proposal that would have divided the Internet into fast and slow lanes, the Federal Communications Commission put forward a new plan on Thursday. While more balanced than its earlier approach, the commission still seems to be leaning toward creating a two-tiered system that could discriminate against smaller companies and restrict consumer choice.

The F.C.C. has been struggling for years to come up with rules to prevent phone and cable companies from blocking or interfering with Internet content. Last month, the chairman of the agency, Tom Wheeler, appeared to throw in the towel when he proposed regulations that would have allowed telecommunications companies to strike deals with firms like Netflix and Amazon for faster delivery of their videos and other data to consumers.

Then, on Thursday, the commission voted 3 to 2 along party lines to consider two options. Under the first option, the F.C.C. would require cable and phone companies to provide their broadband subscribers a basic level of unfettered Internet service. But as long as that condition is met, telecom companies would also be able to charge businesses like Netflix fees to deliver their movies faster to consumers than others.

Under the second option, the commission would reclassify broadband as a telecommunications service, akin to a public utility. That would allow for more stringent regulation that could prevent companies like Verizon and Comcast from engaging in unreasonable and unjust discrimination. Many consumer advocates like Public Knowledge and legal scholars like Tim Wu of Columbia Law School have recommended this option all along.

Mr. Wheeler and the commission's two other Democratic members say they will listen to public comments over the next four months before making up their minds about which of the two options they will pick. (The agency's two Republican members said they voted against the proposal because they do not think the F.C.C. should adopt any such rules.)

There are serious problems with the first option. It would give phone and cable companies a financial incentive to scrimp on basic high-speed Internet service in order to encourage companies like Apple or Google, which owns YouTube, to pay fees for premium delivery. Mr. Wheeler said on Thursday that he doesn't want the Internet "divided into 'haves' and 'have-nots,' " but that's exactly what would happen if the commission creates a regulatory distinction between basic and premium offerings.

The commission would be on much more solid ground if it decided to classify broadband Internet service as a utility. Mr. Wheeler has not been very enthusiastic about this option, which has many opponents among lawmakers in Washington, particularly Republicans who usually side with deep-pocketed phone and cable companies on controversial regulatory matters. But the chairman and the other two Democrats on the commission have to consider this option seriously if they want to make sure Americans can access lawful content on the Internet without restriction.

Mr. Wheeler has said he wants to adopt final rules by the end of the year. But the F.C.C. should take more time if it needs to, as one Democratic commissioner, Jessica Rosenworcel, has suggested. These rules are too important to rush through.

A Once-A-Day Pill To Prevent AIDS

[New York Times](#), May 16, 2014

Federal health officials are urging hundreds of thousands of healthy people at high risk of contracting AIDS to take a pill every day to protect themselves from the virus that causes it. The recommendation could help reduce the stubbornly high number of infections, which has held steady at 50,000 new infections a year in the United States. But the pill carries risks that must be addressed as well.

The drug, made by Gilead Sciences and known as Truvada, contains two antiviral drugs that have been used for a decade in combination with other drugs to treat people already infected with H.I.V., the virus that causes AIDS. Two years ago the Food and Drug Administration approved it for a radically different purpose — to prevent disease in people who have not yet been infected. When taken every day, the pill can be extremely effective; it protected 99 percent of the gay men in one study.

In guidelines issued Wednesday by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the pill is recommended for high-risk groups like gay men who have sex with multiple partners, heterosexuals who have sex with high-risk partners such as intravenous drug users, people in sexual relationships with someone known to be infected, prostitutes and anyone who shares needles. The pill is supposed to be used along with condoms and other safe sex practices to provide added protection, but many men could shun condoms knowing that this option is available.

The dangers of that behavioral change are worrisome. Unprotected sex could lead to higher rates of syphilis, gonorrhea and other sexually transmitted diseases, as well as unwanted pregnancies. If people fail to take their pill every day, as many will, they will increase the risk of developing and spreading a resistant strain of the virus.

Truvada is also expensive — about \$13,000 a year — and usage could soar from fewer than 10,000 prescriptions a year to perhaps 500,000 a year. Most insurers and state Medicaid programs already cover the drug so patients should be able to afford it, but the cumulative cost could cause financial strains for public and private programs.

Even so, the potential benefits of preventing infections outweigh the risks, especially if steps are taken to minimize the risks. Before starting on Truvada, patients should have an H.I.V. test to make sure they are not already infected, in which case they should be taking three drugs. They should be retested every three months to determine whether they have become infected or have developed side effects or sexually transmitted diseases.

The new approach, if carried out with care, could be a big step forward in curbing the toll from AIDS.

Unsolved Atrocities In Bangladesh

[New York Times](#), May 16, 2014

It seems that the Bangladesh International Crimes Tribunal can find only one way to respond to criticism of proceedings that clearly fall short of international standards: charge critics with contempt of court.

The court sought contempt charges against Human Rights Watch last year after the group criticized its proceedings. Last month, the court charged David Bergman, a Bangladesh-based British journalist married to a prominent Bangladeshi human rights lawyer, Sara Hossain, with contempt for questioning some proceedings of the court in his blog.

The tribunal is only harming its own credibility with such charges. Set up to provide a long overdue reckoning of the horrific crimes committed during the country's struggle for independence from Pakistan in 1971, the court has given the appearance of acting more as an instrument of partisan revenge than as a forum for impartial justice. Any criticism of it is reflexively taken as criticism of the governing Awami League and, by absurd extension, of the emergence of Bangladesh itself as an independent nation.

The court has been particularly sensitive about the number of Bangladeshis killed in that struggle. The official number in Bangladesh is three million, but while scholars agree that far too many were murdered in 1971, some believe the number is lower. It is a measure of the court's undue sensitivity that one of the contempt charges leveled against Mr. Bergman is that he merely reported this dispute.

The court also has tried people in absentia, without the benefit of a credible defense, and then sentenced them to death. It is an absurd irony that another of the contempt charges leveled against Mr. Bergman is for the regret he expressed that the trial, conviction and death sentence against Chowdhury Mueen Uddin, a British resident, took place in absentia. The court had based its charges against Mr. Uddin largely on information revealed in Mr. Bergman's 1995 documentary film, "War Crimes File."

Embarrassed by reports about Mr. Bergman's plight, the International Crimes Tribunal has instituted a gag order against the press. Muzzling the press will only further erode the reputation of the court, whose contempt for international standards of justice appears to know no bounds.

Force-Feedings At Guantánamo

[New York Times](#), May 16, 2014

Nothing comes to light easily at the Guantánamo Bay military prison in Cuba where 154 detainees are held on suspicion of terrorist activities. Some have been incarcerated for more than a decade, in a legal limbo that remains a grave embarrassment to American justice.

This week, one of the lawsuits by a Guantánamo detainee produced news that the military has apparently been videotaping its force-feedings of prisoners who have been attempting a hunger strike to protest their confinement and treatment. Pentagon officials admitted last year that the cause of the hunger strike was prisoners' despairing that they would ever be released.

The disclosure is important because a federal appeals court in the District of Columbia decided in February that while it would not initially block the force-feedings (in which prisoners are restrained and fed by a tube through the nose), it would retain jurisdiction and hear prisoners' complaints of inhumane treatment as part of a habeas corpus lawsuit. This could prove to be one of the more promising avenues in the struggle to expose the woeful situation at Guantánamo to greater public attention.

Detainees' lawyers have asked the court to issue an emergency order to prevent the government from destroying any existing video recordings of the force-feedings, after learning of their existence on May 13. Seven years ago at the height of the controversy over waterboarding, the Central Intelligence Agency was found to have destroyed videotapes of interrogation sessions using that torture technique.

President Obama has sought to shut down Guantánamo, but Congress has barred the transfer of detainees to mainland prisons. Administration lawyers insisted this week that there would be “robust protection” of national security if the detainees were transferred, but Congress remains adamant in refusing to close the facility.

The court should order the military to preserve the tapes and to hand them over to the prisoners’ lawyers. The hunger strike and force-feedings are a sorry chapter in the long-running travesty of justice that festers in Guantánamo.

The Man In A Red Bandanna

[New York Times](#), May 16, 2014

Among the many moving moments at the dedication of the National September 11 Memorial Museum in Lower Manhattan on Thursday was a story President Obama told about the man in a red bandanna. Bewildered and frightened, the people huddled in the smoke and darkness that day on the 78th floor of the World Trade Center’s south tower heard a voice, clear and calm, leading them to the stairs and to safety. Their guide was a young man holding a red handkerchief over his face.

Having helped them, he then went back up the stairs to help others.

“They didn’t know his name. They didn’t know where he came from. But they knew their lives had been saved by the man in the red bandanna,” the president said.

When Alison Crowther heard this story a few months after the towers collapsed, she knew their hero was her son Welles Crowther, 24. The young man, who had kept a red handkerchief with him since he was a boy, was one of almost 3,000 people who did not survive the attacks. One of his bandannas is now on display at the museum, a reminder, as the president said, of “the true spirit of 9/11 — love, compassion, sacrifice.”

Mr. Obama and other dignitaries wisely avoided the temptation to use the occasion to make political points or engage in overblown rhetoric, focusing instead on the stories of heroism and survival that are told throughout the cavernous underground museum. The speakers also turned to smaller objects to make larger points about bravery — Todd Beamer’s watch, permanently seared at the number 11, reminding us how he and fellow passengers on United Airlines Flight 93 overpowered the hijackers, dying as their jet crashed in Pennsylvania instead of allowing the attackers to reach the White House.

Forgotten for the day were years of skirmishing among museum leaders, politicians and family members. And saved for later were the pleas from museum officials about the need for more federal money from the president and his colleagues in Washington to support this national memorial. Instead, it was a day for remembering extraordinary people like Welles Crowther.

The Commencement Bigots

By Timothy Egan

[New York Times](#), May 16, 2014

It’s commencement season, cellphones off please, no texts or tweets. Even with a hangover from debt, alcohol or regret, grads across the land may be lucky enough to hear something on the Big Day that actually stays with them.

Among the best of the past were the words of the novelist David Foster Wallace, talking to the newly minted at Kenyon College in 2005. If you can’t learn to “construct meaning from experience,” he said, “you will be totally hosed.”

There was Steve Jobs, college dropout, at Stanford in the same year, on mortality: “Remembering that I’ll be dead soon is the most important tool I’ve ever encountered to help me make the big choices in

life.” And don’t forget the lasting guidance from Stephen Colbert at Knox College in 2006: “The best career advice I can give you is to get your own TV show. It pays well, the hours are good, and you are famous. And eventually, some very nice people will give you a doctorate in fine arts for doing jack squat.”

This year, there’s the remarkable life story of the African-American scholar who grew up in the segregated South and rose to become secretary of state. Didn’t hear that one? Nobody did. Condoleezza Rice was scheduled to give the 248th anniversary commencement address at Rutgers University this coming Sunday. She canceled after a small knot of protesters pressured the university. It’s no contest who showed more class.

Near as I can tell, the forces of intolerance objected to her role in the Iraq war. O.K. And by shutting her down, the point is ... what? That extremism, whether in the climate-denial echo chamber of Republican Party elites or in the fragile zone of college faculty lounges, is the worst enemy of free speech.

Thanks to the bigots, Smith College graduates will be deprived of the thoughts of Christine Lagarde, chief of the International Monetary Fund. She withdrew this week, under pressure from people who object to the I.M.F.’s role in the “strengthening of imperialist and patriarchal systems.” So, one of the world’s most powerful women will not share insights with one of the nation’s most prominent women’s colleges because of a concern about patriarchy. Evil men — that’ll show ‘em.

This was followed by the swift departure of Robert J. Birgeneau, a former chancellor of the University of California, Berkeley, as a speaker at Haverford College. Yes, you heard that right: The man from Berkeley is not suitable for the sensitive souls of Haverford.

For guidance, these censors could have consulted the Rutgers student mission statement. “We embrace difference by cultivating inclusiveness and respect of both people and points of view.” Diversity of perspective? Thy name should be academia. But of late, too many schools are opting for well-vetted bores. Pursue your dream, live your own life, don’t forget to floss or use sunscreen, and if you’re forced to share a hall with people you don’t like, shout them down and kick them out the door.

The foreign policy that Rice guided for George W. Bush — two wars on the credit card, making torture a word associated with the United States — was clearly a debacle. Contemporary assessments were not kind, and history will be brutal.

But if every speaker has to pass a test for benign mediocrity and politically correct sensitivity, commencement stages will be home to nothing but milquetoasts. You want torture? Try listening to the Stanford speech of 2009, when Justice Anthony M. Kennedy gave an interminable address on the intricacies of international law, under a broiling sun, with almost no mention of the graduates.

Give me a brisk, strong, witty defense of something I disagree with over a tired replay of platitudes. It matters little if the speaker is a convict or a seminarian, a statesman or a comedian.

This season, the left is better than the right at pressure tactics designed to kill opposing views. But who wants to claim that title?

Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr. recently canceled an address at the graduation ceremony of the Oklahoma City police academy after he was harassed by gun nuts and Republican elected officials — often a redundancy, I realize. Organizers called for officers in attendance to “place Holder in handcuffs.” Good lesson for the grads — arrest the nation’s highest law enforcement officer because you don’t share his politics. One Republican, an Oklahoma state senator, Paul Wesselhoft, cheered the strong-arm tactics. “This is a significant lesson in political activism,” he said. No, it’s a primer in how to be a bully.

In that sense, the lefty thought police at Smith, Haverford and Rutgers share one thing with the knuckle-dragging hard right in Oklahoma: They're afraid of hearing something that might spoil a view of the world they've already figured out.

Points Of No Return

By Paul Krugman

[New York Times](#), May 16, 2014

Recently two research teams, working independently and using different methods, reached an alarming conclusion: The West Antarctic ice sheet is doomed. The sheet's slide into the ocean, and the resulting sharp rise in sea levels, will probably happen slowly. But it's irreversible. Even if we took drastic action to limit global warming right now, this particular process of environmental change has reached a point of no return.

Meanwhile, Senator Marco Rubio of Florida — much of whose state is now fated to sink beneath the waves — weighed in on climate change. Some readers may recall that in 2012 Mr. Rubio, asked how old he believed the earth to be, replied "I'm not a scientist, man." This time, however, he confidently declared the overwhelming scientific consensus on climate change false, although in a later interview he was unable to cite any sources for his skepticism.

So why would the senator make such a statement? The answer is that like that ice sheet, his party's intellectual evolution (or maybe more accurately, its devolution) has reached a point of no return, in which allegiance to false doctrines has become a crucial badge of identity.

I've been thinking a lot lately about the power of doctrines — how support for a false dogma can become politically mandatory, and how overwhelming contrary evidence only makes such dogmas stronger and more extreme. For the most part, I've been focusing on economic issues, but the same story applies with even greater force to climate.

To see how it works, consider a topic I know well: the recent history of inflation scares.

More than five years have passed since many conservatives started warning that the Federal Reserve, by taking action to contain the financial crisis and boost the economy, was setting the stage for runaway inflation. And, to be fair, that wasn't a crazy position to take in 2009; I could have told you it was wrong (and, in fact, I did), but you could see where it was coming from.

Over time, however, as the promised inflation kept failing to arrive, there should have come a point when the inflationistas conceded their error and moved on.

In fact, however, few did. Instead, they mostly doubled down on their predictions of doom, and some moved on to conspiracy theorizing, claiming that high inflation was already happening, but was being concealed by government officials.

Why the bad behavior? Nobody likes admitting to mistakes, and all of us — even those of us who try not to — sometimes engage in motivated reasoning, selectively citing facts to support our preconceptions.

But hard as it is to admit one's own errors, it's much harder to admit that your entire political movement got it badly wrong. Inflation phobia has always been closely bound up with right-wing politics; to admit that this phobia was misguided would have meant conceding that one whole side of the political divide was fundamentally off base about how the economy works. So most of the inflationistas have responded to the failure of their prediction by becoming more, not less, extreme in their dogma, which will make it even harder for them ever to admit that they, and the political movement they serve, have been wrong all along.

The same kind of thing is clearly happening on the issue of global warming. There are, obviously, some fundamental factors underlying G.O.P. climate skepticism: The influence of powerful vested interests (including, though by no means limited to, the Koch brothers), plus the party's hostility to any argument for government intervention. But there is clearly also some kind of cumulative process at work. As the evidence for a changing climate keeps accumulating, the Republican Party's commitment to denial just gets stronger.

Think of it this way: Once upon a time it was possible to take climate change seriously while remaining a Republican in good standing. Today, listening to climate scientists gets you excommunicated — hence Mr. Rubio's statement, which was effectively a partisan pledge of allegiance.

And truly crazy positions are becoming the norm. A decade ago, only the G.O.P.'s extremist fringe asserted that global warming was a hoax concocted by a vast global conspiracy of scientists (although even then that fringe included some powerful politicians). Today, such conspiracy theorizing is mainstream within the party, and rapidly becoming mandatory; witch hunts against scientists reporting evidence of warming have become standard operating procedure, and skepticism about climate science is turning into hostility toward science in general.

It's hard to see what could reverse this growing hostility to inconvenient science. As I said, the process of intellectual devolution seems to have reached a point of no return. And that scares me more than the news about that ice sheet.

Ireland's Troubled Peace

By Colum Mccann

[New York Times](#), May 16, 2014

FORTY years ago this Saturday, three no-warning bombs ripped through Dublin. Less than an hour later, another bomb shattered the rural quiet of the town of Monaghan. In all, 33 people were killed and more than 300 injured. In Dublin, sheets of newspaper were laid over the dismembered bodies to hide them from view. The headlines soaked up the blood: the news in advance.

There would be more bloody headlines; over the next 24 years, 3,600 people would lose their lives in what have euphemistically been called the Irish "Troubles."

The Troubles ended with the historic peace accords of 1998, which have held, more or less, since then. If the Irish peace process was once a toddler, it is now nearing the age where it must ready itself for university, or a job, or perhaps, most chillingly, the unemployment line.

And yet we can't quite get away from the past, and the reminder that however mature the peace, it is always at risk of faltering, or of falling apart. Justice can be parlayed into revenge.

Just two weeks ago the president of the Irish nationalist Sinn Fein party, Gerry Adams, was arrested and interrogated for four days about the kidnapping and murder of Jean McConville, a mother of 10 who disappeared over 40 years ago. Her body was found on a windswept beach 11 years ago, a bullet hole in the back of the skull.

On Belfast's nationalist Falls Road, a freshly painted mural of Mr. Adams that read "Peacemaker, Leader, Visionary" appeared on a wall, while across town Mervyn Gibson, the chaplain for the Protestant Orange Order said: "Sadly, it's not a memorial mural."

Irish nationalists saw the arrest as an exercise in public humiliation in the run-up to local and European elections. On the other hand, pro-British loyalists were incensed that while Mr. Adams was brought in for questioning, over the years the British government had written 200 letters to fugitives suspected of membership in the Irish Republican Army, saying that there would be no prosecutions.

Meanwhile the atmosphere between leaders inside the Northern Ireland power-sharing executive branch has turned distinctly sour, with the Unionist first minister, Peter Robinson, and the deputy first minister, Martin McGuinness of Sinn Féin, trading verbal jabs of “cowardice” and resignation threats over attacks by suspected paramilitary loyalists in Belfast. And there is a sense on both sides that the British government in particular has walked away, furtively, unwilling to look back.

The peace may be holding, but the process is faltering. Just five months ago, the political parties failed to agree on proposals put forward by Richard N. Haass, an American envoy to the peace process. The most notable obstacles were the matter of flags, parades and how to “contend” with the past, namely through a “historical investigations unit” to carry out inquiries into Troubles-related killings.

What Mr. Haass left behind was a country distinctly unsure of itself. Investment in Northern Ireland has soared in recent years. A sense of color and charm has seeped into the streets. Checkpoints have disappeared. Festivals abound. Sixteen years of peace have meant that a whole generation has grown up without the daily litany of violence.

At the same time, many Catholics and Protestants live in walled-off mini-citadels and their children go to separate schools. A rash of xenophobic attacks against Eastern Europeans have occurred in Belfast, with “Locals Only” scrawled on wooden panels placed over shattered windows.

And small eruptions of violence hit regularly; virtually every year the failure to agree on parade marching routes and the politics of flags serves up yet another reason for the Molotov cocktails to fly. It’s a small sky over Northern Ireland, but there’s a lot of smoke.

The people of Ireland and Britain still desperately want the peace to continue. It’s one of the few things that we have excelled at in recent years. It is a moral commodity. We have put a lot of energy into it. It makes us look good.

If it falters, it will be a disaster not only for us but for the rest of the world. Peace is not a local thing. That’s what makes it superior to war. War stays where war is. Peace belongs elsewhere, as well as at home. That’s part of its muscle. The presence of peace in Ireland is a lifeline, however tentative, to Syria, to Ukraine, to Colombia.

But the sense of exhaustion in Northern Ireland is a self-perpetuating time bomb. This is not just petty political squabbling. Peace — especially at the delicate age of 16 — can have an ego. It can turn off its calculating mind and fall into the dark pit of being satisfied with itself. Forging a continuing peace process means understanding that there are always going to be several viable truths. The peacemaker — as Senator George J. Mitchell, who negotiated the peace, learned in 1998 — must show the tenacity of a fanatic.

It is, of course, naïve to expect total reconciliation. Some grievances are so deep that the people who suffered them will never be satisfied. But the point is not satisfaction — the point is that the present is superior to the past, and it has to be cultivated as such.

Despite the fact that the Obama administration has not appointed an ambassador to Ireland for a year and a half (the longest period that America has not had a top diplomat in Dublin), the White House is still vital to preserving and re-energizing the peace.

Once upon a time, there were bullets in the back of the head. There were car bombs along South Leinster Street. There were young girls getting tarred and feathered in the flatlands of Belfast. That’s not happening anymore. But just because it’s not happening now, doesn’t mean it will not happen again. To lose the process now would be an international crime that reaches backward and forward both.

Colum McCann is the author of the novel “TransAtlantic” and a co-founder of Narrative 4, a global story exchange project.

Stairway To Wisdom

By David Brooks

[New York Times](#), May 16, 2014

Let's say you wanted to understand a social problem in depth. Let's say you wanted to move from a dry, statistical understanding of a problem to a rich, humane one. How would you do it? What steps would you take on your climb toward understanding?

Well, obviously, first you'd start with the data. Let's say, for example, you were studying teenage pregnancy. You'd want to understand the basic facts and trends. You'd discover from a recent Brookings Institution report that annual teenage childbearing rates have declined by an astonishing 52 percent since 1991.

Next you'd want to get some grasp of the general causes for this phenomenon. At this stage, you would consult the academic research.

This research casts doubt on some possible explanations for the amazing decline. Teenage pregnancy rates are not falling because abortion is on the rise. As far as we can tell, abortion rates are falling, too. Better sexual education must have had some role, but that doesn't explain the trend either. Teen pregnancy is declining just as much in states like Texas without comprehensive sex ed as it is in states like New Jersey with it.

On the other hand, improved contraception is working. Pregnancy rates fall as people move away from condoms toward IUDs. Sexual attitudes are changing, too. Teenagers are having their first sexual experiences later than they used to and they are less sexually active than previous generations.

This academic research offers a look at general tendencies within groups. The research helps you to make informed generalizations about how categories of people are behaving. If you use it correctly, you can even make snappy generalizations about classes of people that are fun and useful up to a point.

But this work is insufficient for anyone seeking deep understanding. Unlike minnows, human beings don't exist just as members of groups. We all know people whose lives are breathtakingly unpredictable: a Mormon leader who came out of the closet and became a gay dad; an investment banker who became a nun; a child with a wandering anthropologist mom who became president.

We all slip into the general patterns of psychology and sociology sometimes, but we aren't captured by them. People live and get pregnant one by one, and each life and each pregnancy has its own unlikely story. To move the next rung up the ladder of understanding you have to dive into the tangle of individual lives. You have to enter the realm of fiction, biography and journalism. My academic colleagues sometimes disparage journalism, but, when done right, it offers a higher form of knowing than social science research.

By conducting sensitive interviews and by telling a specific story, the best journalism respects the infinite dignity of the individual, and the unique blend of thoughts and feelings that go into that real, breathing life.

A pregnancy, for example, isn't just a piece of data in a set. It came about after a unique blend of longings and experiences. Maybe a young woman just wanted to feel like an adult; maybe she had some desire for arduous love, maybe she was just absent-minded, or loved danger, or couldn't resist her boyfriend, or saw no possible upside for her future anyway. In each case the ingredients will be different. Only careful case-by-case storytelling can uncover and respect the delirious iconoclasm of how life is actually lived.

But even this isn't the highest rung on the ladder of understanding. Statisticians, academics and journalists all adopt a dispassionate pose. Academics rely on formal methodology and jargon. Journalists observe from behind the wall of their notebooks.

The highest rung on the stairway to understanding is intimacy. Our master-teacher here is Augustine. As he aged, Augustine came to reject those who thought they could understand others from some detached objective stance.

He came to believe that it takes selfless love to truly know another person. Love is a form of knowing and being known. Affection motivates you to want to see everything about another. Empathy opens you up to absorb the good and the bad. Love impels you not just to observe, but to seek union — to think as another thinks and feel as another feels.

There is a tendency now, especially for those of us in the more affluent classes, to want to use education to make life more predictable, to seek control as the essential good, to emphasize data that masks the remorseless unpredictability of individual lives. But people engaged in direct contact with problems like teenage pregnancy are cured of those linear illusions. Those of us who work with data and for newspapers probably should be continually reminding ourselves to bow down before the knowledge of participation, to defer to the highest form of understanding, which is held by those who walk alongside others every day, who know the first names, who know the smells and fears.

Marco Rubio On The 'Settled Science' Of Abortion

By Juliet Lapidos

[New York Times](#), May 16, 2014

Sick of taking flak for his climate-change denial, Senator Marco Rubio tried to change the topic (a classic crisis-management move) by accusing his critics of hypocrisy (another classic).

It's hypocritical, Mr. Rubio told Sean Hannity on Wednesday, for "all these people" to "wag their finger" at him about "science and settled science" — because there's another area of settled science they don't like to discuss.

"Let me give you a bit of settled science that they'll never admit to. The science is settled, it's not even a consensus, it is a unanimity, that human life begins at conception. So I hope the next time someone wags their finger about science, they'll ask one of these leaders on the left: 'Do you agree with the consensus of scientists that say that human life begins at conception?' I'd like to see someone ask that question."

That's pretty cunning, in part because it's hard to craft a rebuttal that doesn't sound callous or lawyerly. E.g.: that's not the point or it depends on what the meaning of 'life' is. But Mr. Rubio probably knows that he's obfuscating what—for most people—is the real issue: Not life, full stop (single-celled organisms are alive) but personhood, which is more a philosophical than a scientific question.

Some abortion opponents believe fervently that a fertilized egg is a person, from a rights standpoint. Others obviously disagree. And in fact so-called "personhood" amendments, which define a fertilized egg as a person, have failed in even social-conservative strongholds. Historically the "quickenings," when a pregnant woman first perceives fetal movements, was used as a marker for the legal beginning of life. Life "begins in contemplation of law as soon as an infant is able to stir in the mother's womb," wrote the British legal scholar William Blackstone in the 18th century.

Mr. Rubio also ignores the fraught — and, again, philosophical as opposed to scientific — question of whether, or at what point or under which circumstances the rights of the fetus trump those of the mother. Many Americans who otherwise oppose abortion believe it should be permissible in cases of

rape or incest or to save the life of the mother. Presumably their views on when life begins aren't germane; they're weighing social and emotional considerations.

Mr. Rubio's comments also raise the uncomfortable question of whether he's prepared to be guided by science in the various tricky issues surrounding the national debate over abortion. As noted in this MSNBC piece, Mr. Rubio has a history of supporting abortion regulations with no scientific merit.

Great Russia's Grand Choice

By Maxim Trudolyubov

[New York Times](#), May 16, 2014

MOSCOW — For most of the post-Soviet years, Russia has been torn by a question that haunts its people and their rulers: Do Russians want their country to be an imperialist power feared by other nations or a land whose primary concern is its citizens' well-being?

President Vladimir V. Putin has resolved the issue, or so it seems. He has decided to tip the balance in favor of ambitious expansionist politics rather than domestic development. Prosperity for the people is all very well up to a point, but it has a downside: It produces independent-minded individuals who may try to vote their ruler out of office.

Pursuing grand strategies on the international stage is safer — at least for Russia's powers that be. Defending the Russian-speaking populations of the former Soviet Union creates so much tension both at home and abroad that the domestic economic agenda is dwarfed in comparison. Who cares about economic deterioration, poor public services or endemic corruption when the nation is gripped by imperialist fervor?

But in pushing Russian expansionism is Mr. Putin really making a safer bet? When asked by pollsters about what Russia's priorities should be, respondents are generally divided. In a recent survey by the Levada Center, a Russian nongovernmental research organization, 48 percent favored prioritizing the country's international standing, while 47 percent said they favored a government that concentrated on creating conditions for individual prosperity.

Almost a decade ago, there were indications that this dilemma was close to being resolved in favor of economic progress and peaceful nation-building. According to a poll conducted in 2005 by Levada, more than 60 percent of respondents said they would prefer to live in a nation with higher living standards, while 36 percent counted national "greatness" as a priority. But that resolve proved temporary.

Back in 2007, Michael Porter, a Harvard business professor, advised the Kremlin on economic matters. He and his team then wrote in an analysis of Russian competitiveness that differences of opinion within the government "go beyond the usual policy disagreements that are present in many governments" and "strike to the heart of the goals of the nation itself."

They continued: "Is the goal politics or prosperity for citizens? There is no clear mechanism to resolve these incompatible aspirations. Instead, conflicting signals threaten to cancel each other out and, even worse, create a high level of uncertainty about future policies."

One has to remember that, in a country where the mass media is under strict government control, public opinion may be easily skewed. For several years, especially since street protests erupted in late 2011 and the Kremlin was shocked to discover serious public discontent, the state propaganda machine has been busy inventing or exaggerating threats the Russians are supposedly facing. Mr. Putin embarked on a radical information offensive to divide and frighten his countrymen.

The current streak of anti-Ukrainian and anti-Western propaganda — fraught with menacing imagery of Ukrainian fascists and their American puppeteers — is only a recent chapter in a larger PR-strategy.

Past Kremlin agitprop has included dire warnings of vague conspiracies to overthrow the government, attacks on artists supposedly seeking to humiliate the Russian church, and warnings that homosexuals and a “pedophile lobby” are using the Internet to undermine the traditional family and Russian society.

These threats, fomented by the state-controlled media, are an excuse to increase the security budget, push anti-gay legislation and laws against “blasphemy,” and establish control over the Internet.

The Kremlin’s current propaganda campaign, focused on the “Ukrainian threat,” has been paraded as a justification for military activity along that country’s borders, for possible covert use of force inside Ukraine and for an all-out information war against the West.

Given the intensity of the media blitz, it’s a sign of relative sanity that only half of Russians are choosing sovereign and military greatness over well-being.

“Despite all the propaganda, half of the country is resisting the imperialist temptation,” says Vladimir Magun, a sociologist with the Russian Academy of Sciences.

Mr. Putin’s annexation of Crimea appears to be overwhelmingly popular, but that is because the true cost is being hidden. The Russian public has readily bought the propaganda message that it received Crimea as a free gift, says Mr. Magun, but it’s like shopping in a store with no price tags. A disappointment awaits us at the exit: Stores that don’t display price tags are usually very expensive.

As a result of Mr. Putin’s adventure, Russians can expect higher borrowing costs and a decrease in the value of the ruble, and along with that, a decrease in the value of their savings. Mr. Putin is risking a severe economic downturn and even a regional war.

The president must understand that he won’t be able to avoid economic realities: We can’t race ahead without fundamental improvements in Russia’s global competitiveness. The economy is in recession, and though the effects have not yet trickled down to most Russians, tougher economic times lie ahead. That will bring a day of reckoning.

Mr. Putin will argue that the West is punishing Russia for its international ambitions and that we, the Russian people, will have to persevere.

This is the type of social contract the Soviet government used to impose on its citizens: The enemy is at the gate, and we all have to hunker down. Mr. Putin is bringing this siege mentality back because he knows very well how to work it to his advantage.

The choice between “greatness” on the world stage and domestic prosperity is a false one. Russia can be a formidable world power while flourishing at home.

Maxim Trudolyubov is the opinion page editor of the business newspaper Vedomosti.

Mr. Obama Is Choosing Not To Act On Syria

[Washington Post](#), May 16, 2014

THE PRINCIPAL achievement the Obama administration might claim in an otherwise tragically failed response to Syria’s civil war is eroding. Last September President Obama brokered an agreement with Russia under which the regime of Bashar al-Assad was to give up its stockpile of chemical weapons and join the Chemical Weapons Convention, which prohibits production or use of those horrific arms.

Yet months after the expiration of the February deadline for removing all chemical stocks from Syria’s territory, the regime not only retains a substantial stockpile but also has returned to assaulting civilian areas with chemicals. The Obama administration’s response is all too familiar: It is trying to avoid acknowledging those facts.

Administration spokesmen boast that 92.5 percent of Syria’s chemical weapons and precursors have been removed from the country for destruction by the end of June. But Damascus is dragging its

feet on delivering the last 27 tons of chemicals used to make deadly sarin gas. According to The Post's Ernesto Londoño and Greg Miller, U.S. officials believe the Assad regime is using the stocks as leverage to retain a network of tunnels and buildings that could be used as storage or production facilities, which the Organisation for Prohibition of Chemical Weapons wants destroyed.

Meanwhile, British, French and U.S. intelligence analysts have concluded that Syria is probably hiding part of its arsenal that it failed to declare, including stocks of sarin and mustard gas, according to news reports. State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki confirmed last week that the United States has been skeptical about whether Assad has revealed the extent of Syria's chemical weapons stockpile.

Finally, evidence is piling up that Assad's forces have been dropping bombs filled with chlorine on opposition-held areas. France's foreign minister told reporters in Washington on Tuesday that there had been at least 14 such attacks since October. Laurent Fabius, who said "things would have been different" had Mr. Obama not backed away from using force in response to a chemical weapons attack last August, said the "regime is still capable of producing chemical weapons and is determined to use them."

Ms. Psaki said April 21 that the United States had "indications" of the use of chlorine, which is not one of the chemicals Syria was obliged to surrender. But the Obama administration has taken the position that it must await an investigation by the OPCW before reaching a definite conclusion. Meanwhile, the chlorine attacks have continued. An unnamed senior U.S. official offered Mr. Londoño and Mr. Miller a frank explanation of this filibuster: "There's reluctance to call attention to it because there's not much we can do about it."

There are, of course, many actions Mr. Obama could take to punish Syria for its use of chemical weapons and to prevent their further deployment. He could begin by granting the opposition's request for antiaircraft missiles to use against the helicopters that are dropping chlorine bombs. He could revive his plan to launch U.S. military strikes against Syrian infrastructure that supports those attacks.

In reality, Mr. Assad is being allowed to disregard his chemical weapons commitment with impunity not because there's nothing the United States can do but because Mr. Obama chooses to do nothing.

How Thailand Is Contributing To The Misery Of Burma's Persecuted Rohingya

By Editorial Board

[Washington Post](#), May 16, 2014

FOR SOME time now, tens of thousands of Rohingya Muslims have been fleeing persecution and economic deprivation in Burma, also known as Myanmar, by boat. While some go off to work and send money home, others have staked all on a permanent exodus, setting sail in search of better times. They don't always find it. Hundreds have died at sea and others have been pulled into a growing vortex of human smuggling.

In 2013, Reuters published a series of remarkable articles that added a new dimension to the Ro-hingya exodus. The news service said its investigation showed that some Thai naval security forces work with smugglers to profit from the fleeing Rohingya. In a July 17 dispatch, Reuters said the lucrative smuggling network transports the Ro-hingya mainly into Malaysia, a Muslim-majority nation that the Rohingya view as a haven. The Reuters investigation showed that the Thai navy has played a role in spotting boats carrying the refugees and putting them in the hands of the smugglers, who demand money from families for onward passage. According to the Reuters report, Thai naval forces are paid about \$65 per Rohingya "for spotting a boat or turning a blind eye" to the smuggling.

The flight of the Rohingya often ends tragically. The Reuters investigation quoted estimates that in the past year as many as 800 people, mostly Rohingya, have died at sea after their boats broke down or

capsized. Those who make it off the seas often are trapped by the smugglers. Men who can't pay the smugglers are handed over to traffickers who sell them into slavery or as indentured servants, while some women are sold as brides.

Reuters won the 2014 Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting for the series . The award cited Jason Szep and Andrew R.C. Marshall for their "courageous reports on the violent persecution of the Rohingya, a Muslim minority in Myanmar that, in efforts to flee the country, often falls victim to predatory human-trafficking networks."

In addition to Reuters, a Thai news Web site, Phuketwan, has carried stories for seven years describing the flight of the Rohingya.

So what has Thailand done? Instead of seeking to rectify the situation, the Royal Navy has denied mistreating the refugees and decided to intimidate the messenger. Alleging criminal defamation and a breach of national computer crimes law, the navy filed complaints in December against Phuketwan, which had carried the Reuters stories in addition to its own reporting. In recent days, a similar complaint was lodged against Reuters. In both, those convicted could face up to seven years in prison and a fine, according to Phuketwan.

This is a sad case of Thailand's navy attempting to extinguish reporting rather than the misery that the reporting exposed. It is wrong to punish the journalists. But this misguided attempt at coercion is doubly wrong because it attempts to hide the shameful treatment of a people, the Rohingya, who are already suffering far too much.

Read more about this issue: Holly Atkinson and Michael Abramowitz: Burma's Rohingya need protection The Post's View: Unspeakable violence against Muslims in Burma The Post's View: Calibrating U.S. policy on Burma Michael Green and Daniel Twining: U.S. is moving too fast on Burma The Post's View: U.N. Human Rights Council should keep an eye on Burma Desmond Tutu: Burma's chance to do right by all its people

European Union Is Forcing Google To 'forget' Some Links In A Blow To Public Information

[Washington Post](#), May 16, 2014

MANY PEOPLE have a link or two they wish wouldn't pop up when they Google their own names. They will appreciate the motivation of an audacious ruling the European Court of Justice handed down Monday. But the ruling could easily damage the flow of information on which the Internet depends.

The case was brought by a Spanish lawyer who wanted Google to remove links to articles legally published in 1998 by a newspaper about old tax debts. Spanish authorities agreed with him, but the country's courts asked European Union jurists for legal guidance. The result was a ruling that is vague and nearly impenetrable, leaving the details for officials, courts and private companies to fill in. But the essential principle is this: The rights of individuals to control information that concerns them "override, as a general rule, the interest of Internet users."

That logic should be reversed, particularly when public information is at issue. It is dangerous when any government demands that legitimately published material on the public record be obscured, whether to protect individuals' feelings or the reputations of those in high office. Activists, concerned citizens and all sorts of ordinary people — yes, even journalists — could be denied ready access to information that may seem "irrelevant" to European officials but turns out to be important in public and private life. If there is to be a general principle, it should be to treat search-engine removal requests with extreme caution. Instead, the European court has made it hard for Google to refuse them.

The company may well see a deluge of privacy requests, and it may incur fines if it makes the wrong call. Faced with this equation, the company will have legal and financial incentives to remove links. Google already has received demands from a politician, a doctor and a person convicted of child pornography to remove links to unflattering material, in newspaper articles and on review Web sites, from search results. The court suggested that there must be a balance between privacy protections and the flow of public information and that public officials would get less deference. But that may not be the practical result.

Even if Google tries to keep as many links in its results as possible, there are a variety of difficult lines that someone will have to draw — very possibly to the detriment of the public. Who, for example, counts as a public figure? An ex-politician? A politician's children, who may run for office in a few years? A significant shareholder in a factory that environmental activists are investigating? Are lawyers' past tax debts really irrelevant to their potential clients, as the Spanish case suggests? What about reviews on Web sites such as Yelp? Should they be harder to find after some time? How much time?

Concerns about privacy are serious. Companies such as Google may have to work harder to allay these concerns, and countries may not want to leave this difficult balancing entirely to the private sector. But as European governments begin to implement this court decision, they should give more weight to the public's interest in the free flow of information than the judges did.

Read more about this issue: Justin Moyer: The case against the Google Doodle Richard Cohen: The NSA is doing what Google does The Post's View: Google's privacy policy complicates protecting personal data Craig A. Newman: Advancing Internet freedom doesn't come for free

Why The Mideast Peace Process Is In Tatters

By David Ignatius

[Washington Post](#), May 16, 2014

Sometimes things have to get worse before they get better. Other times, they just get worse. We'll find out soon which of those descriptions characterizes the collapsed Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

The negotiations were a determined effort by Secretary of State John Kerry and his special adviser, Martin Indyk, to create viable Palestinian and Jewish states. But despite Kerry's relentless enthusiasm, the two sides never really came close. They are further apart now than when the process began, with the mistrust even deeper.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas wanted a map of the territory that a Palestinian state would occupy. He asked for it when the talks began last July, and he was still demanding one last month when the talks shattered, with the United States pleading for nine more months of negotiations under an American "agreed framework." But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu would never deliver the map, probably because he wanted to avoid the political battle with settlers who would be outside the future borders of Israel.

The issue of Israeli settlements humiliated the Palestinian negotiators and poisoned the talks, according to statements by U.S. negotiators. When Israel announced 700 new settlements in early April, before the April 29 deadline of the talks, "Poof, that was sort of the moment," Kerry told a Senate panel. Warned Indyk at a gathering of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, "Rampant settlement activity — especially in the midst of negotiations — doesn't just undermine Palestinian trust in the purpose of the negotiations; it can undermine Israel's Jewish future."

Abbas was also a huge disappointment. He effectively shut down as a negotiator midway through the talks, whether in response to Netanyahu's intransigence or because of his own unwillingness to make

compromises. The high-water mark for Abbas was probably the beginning of the process, when he responded favorably to a security plan drawn up by Gen. John Allen, the retired U.S. commander in Kabul, who had been tapped by Kerry to propose arrangements that would protect Israel if there were a Palestinian state.

Abbas was “ready to put his state’s security in American hands,” Indyk told the institute. The Palestinian leader had accepted that his future state would be disarmed, but he had previously argued that after Israeli troops left the Jordan Valley — say, five years hence — border security would be guaranteed by NATO (a solution that Israel, mistrustful of the Europeans, opposed). Now Abbas had decided that the United States, Israel’s closest ally, could control his airspace and land access in the future. U.S. negotiators saw it as a big concession, but Israel opposed that, too.

Abbas’s brooding turned to truculence. Kerry had gotten Arab League foreign ministers to support recognition of Israel as a Jewish state, a fundamental demand for Netanyahu. Abbas went to the Arabs and got them to reverse this helpful position. When the United States began laying down its agreed framework, with “bridging proposals” to narrow the gaps on the most contentious final issues, such as refugees and Jerusalem, Abbas never responded. Rather than accept the framework “with reservations,” as planned, Abbas balked.

U.S. officials sensed that Abbas was in such a deep funk about “that man,” as he privately called Netanyahu, that he simply wanted out. Ari Shavit, a prominent Israeli columnist for Haaretz, likened the process to the gloomy existential play “Waiting for Godot.”

Israelis and Palestinians both attacked Kerry during the process. A low point came when Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Yaalon described the U.S. secretary of state as “obsessive and messianic.” Netanyahu, who maintained a warm relationship with Kerry and often smoked big cigars during their five-hour-plus meetings in Jerusalem, seemed to have shown a hint of flexibility late in the process, offering movement on some core issues. But by then it was too late.

The question is what comes next, after the failure of this intense U.S. effort. The Palestinians are threatening to charge Israel under the Geneva Conventions that protect civilians in occupied territories. The Israelis may retaliate by cutting off money to Abbas’s government and announcing new settlements. If this happens, Abbas says he will dissolve the Palestinian Authority — and insist that Israel take on the \$3 billion cost and endless headaches of governing 2.5 million Palestinians. U.S. officials don’t think he’s bluffing.

If these catastrophic developments ensue, Israel will find itself living with a one-state solution after all. Optimists think this might provide reality therapy, showing that Israel can survive as a healthy Jewish state only if a Palestinian state exists, too. But after this last exercise in frustration and bitterness, there aren’t many optimists left.

Our Disconnected Working Class

By Michael Gerson

[Washington Post](#), May 16, 2014

Much about the future health of the republic depends on Harvard sociologist Robert Putnam being wrong. Given the track record of Harvard social scientists, this might appear a reasonable bet. But, in this case, Putnam’s diligence and thoughtfulness make for very bad news.

Putnam has spent much of his academic life as America’s chief chronicler of declining social institutions — a dour task, cheerfully performed. In the 1990s, he began drawing together the disparate evidence of declining attendance at bowling leagues, church services and Moose lodges. His data points

included the falloff in yearly picnic attendance and a rise in the incidence of drivers giving each other the finger.

It was the composite image of one of the most powerful forces of modernity: a rising individualism that “liberates” people from social commitments that make their lives orderly and pleasant.

Even worse, the extent of this trend is not distributed equally in society. Putnam’s recent work — to be summarized in a forthcoming book called “Our Kids” — focuses on how the consequences of institutional decline are felt disproportionately among the working class, leaving vast numbers of youths disconnected from the promise of American life.

Upper- and middle-class parents are investing relatively more time and resources in the social development of their children than are working-class parents, at a time when such investments have never been more economically strategic. This widening gap can be measured in parental play and reading time with young children; later, in the engagement of older children in extracurricular activities. Suburban minivans are occupied in taxiing children to tutoring, sports, clubs, youth groups and volunteer activities. By these measures, children from working-class backgrounds are falling behind.

The problem is that early social connectedness is a strong predictor of later success in life — test scores, college attendance and income. So what Putnam calls the “youth class gap” is a source of deep (and perhaps deepening) social division.

Much of modern liberalism — recently inspired and incited by Thomas Piketty’s book “Capital in the Twenty-First Century” — is focused on growing income inequality. And surely, at some eventual point along an unbroken trend of increasing returns to capital and diminishing returns to wages, the rich and poor will cease to be fellow citizens in any meaningful sense. But what is most striking about a disproportionate emphasis on income inequality is how distorting and distracting it is.

If income inequality is the main economic problem, it could be solved tomorrow, through confiscation and redistribution. If the main problem is the unequal generation of social capital in institutions such as families, schools and communities, the solutions get more difficult. One task can be accomplished by a tax collector; the other is the work of a civilization.

Putnam’s analysis both illuminates the complexity of public policy choices and increases the likelihood that policy solutions could gain broad political support. His proposed explanations for the disproportionate decline in social connectedness among the working class are ideologically diverse. “Decreasing social mobility,” he argues, “represents a perfect storm with multiple, interrelated causes, such as [a] widening income gap and increasing economic insecurity for working-class households, changes in the working-class family structure, [and the] unraveling of the informal social safety net in working-class neighborhoods.”

These arguments are rooted in observation rather than ideology. But they create the possibility of ideological consensus, or at least of ideological compromise. Proposals focused mainly on reducing income inequality require the political triumph of the left. Conservatives, being conservatives, will not concede leveling as a valid economic goal. But an agenda that increases the rewards of work, encourages stable, engaged families and promotes healthy community institutions could be a shared political enterprise.

Put another way, an abstract argument between advocates of economic liberty and advocates of economic equality can only be settled by victory for one side. The goal of building social capital can (at least in theory) be a virtuous competition. It might include a range of approaches: increasing the earned-income tax credit for single workers (who are often non-custodial parents); working to reduce non-marital

births; promoting broader access to higher education; encouraging mentoring; increasing the child tax credit.

The goal of this approach would be to strengthen the social institutions — education, family, work — that strengthen social mobility. And this might have a chance of decreasing the polarization of our economy and the polarization of our politics.

Shareholder Capitalism Vs. Stakeholder Capitalism

By Harold Meyerson

[Washington Post](#), May 16, 2014

Sometimes, a throw-away sentence, a passage not intended to make a major point, ends up telling us a great deal more than the author intended. One such passage popped up in a recent Wall Street Journal story that documented U.S. corporations' scramble to buy overseas companies and thereby shift their legal residency abroad to benefit from lower tax rates. The story noted that roughly 1,700 U.S.-based companies currently are holding \$1.5 trillion offshore rather than bringing it home and paying taxes on it. "But that," the story said, "has left the bulk of their funds for paying dividends or buying back shares effectively out of reach."

Actually, those funds kept cosseted abroad could be put to more uses than buying back shares or paying dividends if those companies brought them home. They might fund more research and development, or start a new product line, or even give employees a raise. But the Journal story has it right. American big business these days is in the business of rewarding shareholders (a group that very much includes chief executives), to the exclusion of any other activity that might help companies flourish. They're in the business of raising their dividends and buying back stock, a practice that effectively raises the value of outstanding shares. Such measures do nothing to enhance a company's long-term value. But long-term value is a diminishing factor in many CEOs' calculations, as they come under pressure from extortion artists — the euphemism is "activist investors" — who demand bigger dividends, and as the CEOs' own fortunes are linked to share value as well.

As The Post's Steven Pearlstein recently documented, 80 percent of the companies listed on the S&P 500 bought back their own shares last year, spending \$477 billion on raising share values by diminishing the number of shares outstanding. The S&P 500 spent 30 percent more on dividends and stock buybacks than they did on capital expenditures. Worse yet, most of these buybacks were funded by these corporations taking on debt. Indeed, of the \$3.4 trillion in debt that U.S. non-financial corporations have incurred since 2009, nearly 87 percent has gone to stock buybacks and dividend payments.

The next time a corporate CEO chastises the federal government for taking on debt to meet current expenses, tell him to clean up his own house first.

Shareholder capitalism in the United States has reached the point of absurdity. More than three decades ago, economist Milton Friedman argued that a company's sole obligation should be to its shareholders. But even Friedman didn't argue that companies should cut back on everything else or plunge themselves deep into debt just to raise their shareholders' rewards. Nevertheless, that — as that Wall Street Journal so succinctly illustrated — is what shareholder capitalism has become today.

That's why an increasing number of top business reporters and commentators have turned against shareholder capitalism. Two years ago, writing in the Harvard Business Review, that magazine's editorial director, Justin Fox, and Harvard Business School professor Jay Lorsch argued that shareholders performed none of the three basic tasks that, theoretically, justified their claim on corporate profits: They

didn't normally provide the companies with capital (which corporations usually get through retained earnings and borrowing), they didn't provide a barometer of the company's value (unless you believe that the share price is always accurate), and they didn't provide a check on management — save to feather their own nests. In a recent issue of the American Prospect, a magazine I help edit, The Post's Pearlstein delivered his own withering critique of shareholder capitalism. And last week, Martin Wolf, the chief economics writer for the Financial Times — the most venerable and respected journal for investors — argued that shareholder capitalism had become so dysfunctional that “we need to rethink ownership and control of limited liability companies” (that is, publicly listed corporations).

Wolf's point is that shareholders are far from the major risk-holders in the modern corporation. That distinction goes to the firm's employees, who have “firm-specific skills.” And yet, Wolf continues, “employees have no voice in what happens to a company to which they might have devoted their lives, while the shareholder of ten seconds does.”

The alternative model to which Wolf implicitly points is the kind of stakeholder capitalism that exists in Germany, where workers, and sometimes public representatives, take half the seats on corporate boards and have a real voice in company decision making. Changing corporate structure in the United States will require an epochal political value, but it's long past time that that battle began.

Rein In China In Its Dispute With Vietnam Over Energy Resources

By Elizabeth Economy And Michael Levi

[Washington Post](#), May 16, 2014

Elizabeth Economy and Michael Levi are senior fellows at the Council on Foreign Relations and the authors of “By All Means Necessary: How China's Resource Quest is Changing the World.”

The China National Overseas Oil Corporation began drilling in Vietnamese-claimed waters last week, accompanied by more than 70 vessels, including armed Chinese warships. At first glance this might look like merely another front in China's quest for natural resources, which has taken Chinese companies to seemingly every corner of the earth.

Yet what is happening in the South China Sea is actually far more dangerous than what has come before — and the forces driving it go well beyond pursuit of energy riches. The United States needs to face up to the full magnitude of the Chinese challenge if it is to have any hope of successfully confronting it. This means not only tough talk but also a willingness to take difficult action.

There has long been speculation that massive oil and gas deposits are locked beneath the South China Sea — 1.4 million square miles bordered by Brunei, China, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam, and claimed in part by all of them. According to the Chinese Ministry of Land and Resources, the area might contain as much as 400 billion barrels of oil, surpassing the bounties of the Middle East.

Most informed estimates, though, are much smaller. The United States Geological Survey estimated in 2010 that the region's undiscovered oil (much of which will never be attractive to produce) totals a far smaller 11 billion barrels. It is difficult to believe that China would risk armed conflict for such modest stakes.

Two other forces are essential to understanding what is going on. One is nationalism: The drilling is taking place near the Paracel Islands, which sit within a disputed area of the South China Sea, roughly 120 miles from Vietnam's coast and well within Vietnam's 200-mile exclusive economic zone. But China claims the islands based on historical usage and effective exercise of sovereignty, having occupied them since 1974. Backing off from the Paracels would deal a blow to China's prestige, while underlining Chinese control over the islands would strengthen the leadership's legitimacy at home.

Chinese leaders are also motivated by a desire to control the sea lanes of the South China Sea. More than \$5 trillion of trade passes through the increasingly crowded waters per year. That includes almost one-third of world seaborne oil trade and more than three-quarters of Chinese oil imports (as well as most of the oil destined for Japan, South Korea and Taiwan). The Chinese navy may be too weak to challenge U.S. dominance in critical Middle East sea lanes, or even to exercise control over the critical Straits of Malacca, but by operating naval forces across the South China Sea it can gain greater confidence that the United States will not be able to disrupt its supplies.

Beyond these two motivations, it does not hurt that Chinese oil companies are also eager to operate in the region. By cloaking its military excursion in commercial garb, Beijing might hope to defuse some of the inevitable opposition.

That gambit has not paid off. China's latest move, which came as a genuine surprise to Vietnam and other nations, undermines Beijing's insistence that strong relations within the region are its top foreign policy priority. It also calls into question China's commitment to its current working-group talks with Vietnam on joint resource development in the South China Sea.

The United States has said it won't take a stand on the sovereignty dispute, and has called the two parties to resolve their differences peacefully. This is not enough: The United States ought to call China's bluff and make clear the real stakes. The United States and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations should present a unified front in refusing to recognize unilateral assertions of claims in disputed territories.

Even more important, the United States must be prepared to give life to its rhetorical position. Although it does not have a treaty obligation to defend Vietnam, its rebalancing to Asia is premised on its role as the primary guarantor of stability in the Asia Pacific. Chinese actions challenge that.

Vietnam has reiterated its commitment to peaceful resolution of the dispute. If China does not reciprocate, the United States should be prepared to offer support to Vietnam through an increased naval presence. This would give Washington the ability to assess Chinese capabilities and to help de-escalate the situation. Other options, such as restrictions on the Chinese oil corporation's activities in the United States, could also be considered. If the United States can't back up its words with actions, its credibility in promising to uphold peace and stability in the region will be gutted.

Paying For Your Fair Share In An App-based Economy

By Catherine Rampell

[Washington Post](#), May 16, 2014

SAN FRANCISCO

"Organic." "Artisanal." "Community-based." "Social." "Local." "Fresh." "Natural." And the godfather of them all: "Green."

These words used to have specific definitions and usages before they were hijacked by businesses and brand managers wanting to connote vague warmth-and-fuzziness.

"Sharing" is now at risk of linguistic appropriation and buzzword-ification, too — in this case by the entrepreneurs of Silicon Valley.

This week I attended a conference here called "SHARE: Catalyzing the New Sharing Economy." As I learned from my fellow attendees — and as you may already know from reading about taxi-drivers' scuffles with Uber or the New York attorney general's battles with Airbnb — the app-based "sharing economy" is vast and growing. It includes "home-sharing" (hosting strangers in your house, for money); "ride-sharing" (driving people around, for money); "food-sharing" (cooking for other people, for money);

“closet-sharing” (giving away your used clothing, for money); “boat-sharing” (letting other people use your boat, for money); “book-sharing” (shipping off your old textbooks to needy students, for money); “parking-space sharing” (letting a stranger park in your driveway, for money); and pretty much every other kind of rental or purchase transaction you think of, but conducted through a decentralized network of “peers” newly haloed with the altruistic mission of “sharing.”

One woman told me she had recently quit her job to manage Airbnb properties full-time and called herself a “home-sharer.” I asked if providing lodging to tourists counted as “sharing” when she was charging them for this service. Isn’t that just, umm, a hotel? Or maybe a short-term rental? Well, she said, it wasn’t like she was getting rich like real hotels do (and so why should she have to pay hotel taxes?).

As you can tell from all my scare-quotes, I left the day’s events thoroughly confused about what “sharing” really is in the modern age. So the day after attending SHARE, I decided to consult another group of experts on the topic: preschoolers.

After all, sharing is one of the main things they learn. And these were not just any preschoolers, but preschoolers in Silicon Valley — at the Oshman Family JCC preschool in Palo Alto, to be exact — so they should have a particularly fine appreciation of the more contemporary, app-driven nuances of the word.

“Sharing is a really big part of their curriculum,” one of the teachers assured me.

Notebook in hand, I confronted the chubby-cheeked Silicon Valley scions, my somewhat unfocused focus group. (Disclosure: My nephew attends this preschool. Rest assured, though, I interrogated his classmates with the same merciless objectivity as I would any other group of 3- to 5-year-olds.)

“What is sharing?” I asked, watching their expressions carefully.

“It’s giving people a turn,” offered a pint-size brunette. “It’s giving stuff to people,” said a fidgety little boy.

Okay, easy enough. That, of course, was the softball question. I asked a tougher follow-up: “Let’s say you want to play with my toy, and I say, ‘Only if you give me a cookie.’ Is that sharing?”

“No!” the kids cried unanimously.

“What is it?” I asked.

“That’s being mean!” said one girl. “Don’t be mean.”

I told her I wasn’t sure she had it completely right; offering a toy in exchange for a cookie-based currency isn’t necessarily mean. She then agreed it was more like a trade but was still pretty insistent that it wasn’t sharing, nor was any other transaction where I got paid for giving something away.

At its most benign, calling things “sharing” that are actually no different from traditional commerce is just empty marketing. It might also crowd out other activities that used to be done for altruistic purposes (like donating your old clothes to Goodwill rather than selling them on the Internet, or offering a friend a ride to the airport instead of charging for the service).

But more perniciously, this semantic sleight of hand has been used to justify tax evasion and other kinds of law-skirting. Of course you shouldn’t have to pay hotel taxes if you’re just “sharing” your home! And of course you shouldn’t have to submit to health-department restaurant inspections if you’re just “sharing” your kitchen with paying customers every night! Or get a taxi medallion or commercial insurance if you’re just “sharing” your car!

There’s nothing inherently unethical about monetizing skills or capital that are otherwise lying fallow, and no doubt many of these new “sharing economy” platforms are helping some 99-percenters make money in flexible, rewarding, creative ways. But to call these activities “sharing” is an insult to the intelligence of existing businesses, regulators and 5-year-olds everywhere.

Clinton Gets The GOP Treatment

By Eugene Robinson

[Washington Post](#), May 16, 2014

Republican panic at the prospect of facing Hillary Clinton in the 2016 presidential race has suddenly reached Godzilla-nearing-Tokyo proportions.

The election is more than two years away, and Clinton hasn't even decided whether to run. But none of this seems to matter to the GOP strategists and spinmeisters who are launching the whole arsenal at her — smears, innuendo, false charges. Already, they've moved beyond distorting her record to simply making stuff up.

As these damp squibs clatter harmlessly to the ground, it's useful to remember that Clinton has seen it all before. And I mean all. Anyone who thinks she'll be rattled or intimidated hasn't been paying attention the past few decades.

If anything, Republicans are succeeding in raising Clinton's profile and perhaps making her a more sympathetic figure. This was certainly the impact of Karl Rove's smarmy and unfounded recent speculation about her health.

In December 2012, Clinton, ill with a virus, fell in her home and suffered a concussion, spent three days in the hospital, wore corrective glasses briefly for double vision — meanwhile going back to work as secretary of state — and made what to all appearances was a full recovery.

Rove grossly inflated the episode to “30 days in the hospital” and “traumatic brain injury.” Appearing later on Fox News, he insisted that Clinton's health “is going to be an issue.” The Clinton camp responded that “there are no words for this level of lying” and gave assurances that Clinton is in perfect health. But Rove's intent was clear: Fabricate an “issue,” toss it out and see if it sticks.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), an all-but-announced candidate for the GOP nomination, was even less subtle, claiming that Clinton's term at the State Department was characterized by “massive failures.” He mentioned her inability to get Russian President Vladimir Putin to behave like a model citizen — something that no secretary of state, as I recall, has managed to do. Oh, and he mentioned Benghazi.

Benghazi, Benghazi, Benghazi. . . . Get used to that name, because you'll hear it a zillion times if Clinton runs. We've seen from her appearances before Congress, however, that she answers questions about the tragedy forcefully and well. I wouldn't bet my political future on the dubious prospect that she'll meekly go away if the Benghazi chant is raised to a din.

Given that Clinton's actual record at State is unpromising for Republicans to attack, there is now an effort to foul the atmospherics of her tenure. Most far-fetched is the suggestion that Boko Haram might not have kidnapped those nearly 300 Nigerian schoolgirls if Clinton had pushed — against the advice of diplomats, experts and the Nigerian government — to designate the group as a terrorist organization. There is no basis for this unlikely notion. Boko Haram has been on the terrorist list since November, and it didn't stop them.

If she runs, this won't be Clinton's first rodeo. It won't be the first time that bitter opponents have spun a false history out of whole cloth and tried to pin it on her. The paranoid fantasy over Vince Foster's suicide comes to mind.

The reason for all this panic is obvious: Republicans fear that if Clinton runs, she'll win.

Polls consistently show her beating all hypothetical GOP opponents, both nationally and in key swing states. New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie was competitive, for a time, but the George Washington Bridge scandal has sent his numbers south. Jeb Bush, if he decides to run — and manages to win the

nomination — might have the kind of crossover appeal that would give Clinton trouble. But at present, none of the other frequently cited contenders seems much of a threat.

Nothing is guaranteed, of course. You will recall that Clinton was supposed to steamroll her way to the 2008 Democratic nomination, only to have the junior senator from Illinois get in the way. In 2016 she might well face a challenge from the party's activist left.

If Clinton should get the nomination, her Republican opponent — no matter who it is — would be no pushover. But the possibility of electing the first woman as president would likely stoke the enthusiasm of Democratic voters to the point where the party's structural advantages — overwhelming support among minorities and women — come into play. Clinton might win big.

Hence all the premature mudslinging, which reeks of desperation. Republicans hear the sound in the distance. They feel it in their bones. Stomp. Stomp. Stomp.

The Sound And The Fury — And The Tweet

By Charles Krauthammer

[Washington Post](#), May 16, 2014

Mass schoolgirl kidnapping in Nigeria — to tweet or not to tweet? Is hashtagging one's indignation about some outrage abroad an exercise in moral narcissism or a worthy new way of standing up to bad guys?

The answer seems rather simple. It depends on whether you have the power to do something about the outrage in question. If you do, as in the case of the Obama administration watching Russia's slow-motion dismemberment of Ukraine, it's simply embarrassing when the State Department spokeswoman tweets the hashtag #UnitedForUkraine.

That is nothing but preening, a visual recapitulation of her boss's rhetorical fatuousness when he sternly warns that if the rape of this U.S. friend continues, we are prepared to consider standing together with the "international community" to decry such indecorous behavior — or some such.

When a superpower, with multiple means at its disposal, reverts to rhetorical emptiness and hashtag activism, it has betrayed both its impotence and indifference. But if you're an individual citizen without power, if you lack access to media, drones or special forces, then hashtagging your solidarity with the aggrieved is a fine gesture and perhaps even more.

The mass tweet is, after all, just the cyber equivalent of the mass petition. And people don't sneer at petitions. Historically, they've been a way for individuals, famous or anonymous, to make their views known and, by weight of number, influence authorities who, in democratic societies, might respond to such expressions of popular sentiment.

The hashtag campaign for the Nigerian girls — originated in Nigeria by Nigerians — was meant to do exactly that: pressure the Nigerian government to respond more seriously to the kidnapping. It has already had this effect. And attention from abroad has helped magnify the pressure.

As always, however, we tend to romanticize the power of the tweet. For a while, Twitter (and other social media) was seen as a game-changer that would empower the masses and invert the age-old relationship between the ruler and ruled.

This is mostly rubbish. Yes, the tweet improves upon the mass petition because tweets contain an instant return address that allows for mass mobilization. People can be summoned to gather together somewhere — Tahrir Square, for example.

At which point, alas, the age-old dynamics of power take hold. If the tyrant, brandishing guns and tanks, is cruel and determined enough, your tweets will mean nothing. Try it at Tahrir or Tiananmen, in

Damascus or Tehran. They will shoot and torture you, then maybe even let you keep your precious smartphone.

Michelle Obama's tweeting #BringBackOurGirls for the nearly 300 schoolgirls kidnapped by Boko Haram terrorists poses an interesting case of the semi-official tweet. This was no exercise in vanity. She does advise the man who does deploy the forces and who in this case provided serious concrete support — intelligence, reconnaissance, on-the-ground advisers — to help fight the evil.

What was peculiar about her tweet, however, was its uniqueness: It's the first time she's expressed herself so personally and publicly about a foreign crisis. And she was nicely candid about the reason: "In these girls, Barack and I see our own daughters."

The identity of the victims here — young, black and female — undoubtedly helps explain the worldwide reaction. Two months earlier, Boko Haram had raided a Christian school and, after segregating the boys, brutally murdered 59 of them. That elicited no hashtag campaign against Boko Haram. Nor was there any through the previous years of Boko Haram depredations — razing Christian churches, burning schools, killing infidels of all ages.

Nonetheless, selective outrage is not necessarily hypocrisy. There are a million good causes in the world, and one cannot be devoted to all of them. People naturally gravitate to those closest to their heart. Thus last week's unlikely sight: a group of congresswomen holding a news conference demanding immediate U.S. action — including the possible use of drones — against Boko Haram.

These were members, like Sheila Jackson Lee, not heretofore known for hawkish anti-jihadist sentiments. No matter. People find their own causes. Their sincerity is to be credited and their commitment welcomed.

The American post-9/11 response to murderous jihadism has often been characterized, not least by our own president, as both excessive and morally suspect. There is a palpable weariness with the entire enterprise. Good, therefore, that new constituencies for whom jihadism and imposed Shariah law ranked low among their urgent concerns should now be awakening to the principal barbarism of our time.

Trending now (once again): anti-jihadism, a.k.a. the War on Terror.

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL STORIES

More Delaware Children Living In Poverty

[Wilmington \(DE\) News Journal](#), May 15, 2014

The percentage of Delaware children living in poverty has doubled since the 2008 recession, according to a report that tracks the well-being of state youth.

The continued rise in poverty is disturbing because children living in poverty can suffer a disproportionate share of deprivation, hardship and negative outcomes in their education, health and general well-being.

Released this week, the Kids Count study shows 20.6 percent of Delaware children live in poverty. Although slightly better than the national rate of 21.9 percent, it's much worse than the under 12 percent rate of 2007 and continues to climb.

Janice Barlow, director of the Kids Count report, doesn't see the trend changing in the near future.

"I'm a pretty optimistic person and I have hope, but I think it really will take people in positions of power who are making some decisions to really care about kids," Barlow said. "And more than just talking the talk but actually putting their money where their mouth is and investing in children."

The report, now in its 19th year, is designed to draw attention to the well-being of children and serve as a call to action. So far, Barlow does not see this happening as much as she would like.

"I do see pockets of it happening. It's just not systemic yet," she said. Barlow did note Gov. Jack Markell's proposal to expand the home visiting program – a free program to help mothers and their families during pregnancy and after child birth – as one effort being made.

Story: Lawmakers OK Markell's urban rebuilding program

Story: Fast-food workers demand higher wages

Alexis Simms, a parent of three, was not surprised to hear some of the report's poverty numbers.

"I can see that there are more children who are in need, more families who are in need," Simms said, adding she sees it in the school at which she works. "Hopefully now that this report came out, there will be more awareness and hopefully more people in politics ... will start trying to make policies that are going to benefit these children that need the help."

Children from low-income families are also more likely to experience poor health and to die during childhood. The state's infant mortality rate of 8.1 deaths in the first year of life per 1,000 births continues to be high and outpaces the nation's rate of 6.4 per 1,000.

The report points out that low-income children score lower on standardized tests and are more likely to be retained in grade or to drop out. Low-income teens are more likely to have out-of-wedlock births and to experience violent crime.

They're also more likely to end up as poor adults.

The report is not all negative. Some bright spots include a decrease in the state's low birth weight births, although still higher than the national rate.

In Delaware, 8.8 percent of children born weigh less than 5.5 pounds, while nationally, 8.2 percent of children are considered low birth weight. Low birth weight carries a range of health risks for children, according to the report. Babies who are very low in birth weight have a 25 percent chance before turning 1.

The state's teen pregnancy rates continued to drop too.

Just a decade ago, Delaware's teen pregnancy rate was higher than the national rate. But a few years ago, Delaware's teen pregnancy rate dropped below the national average and continues to drop at a faster rate. The most current numbers show the state's births to 15- to 17-year-olds at 18.2 per thousand, while the national rate is 19.1.

"I'm glad to hear that," said Golden Ford-Jones, director of the Delaware Adolescent Program Inc.'s Wilmington campus. The program serves pregnant and parenting teens and their families.

Ford-Jones, who had not seen the study, attributed the reduction to more awareness in the state toward reducing teen pregnancy.

"There is a lot more awareness for students, for staff and agencies such as Planned Parenthood, Child's Inc. and even within the schools," she said.

But the poverty-related numbers were the most striking including the finding that for the first time more than half of students in public schools qualify for free or reduced-price meals.

"This is double what it was a decade ago," Barlow said. "It just keeps going up."

Sheila Davis, who was dropping her children off at the Latin American Community Center in Wilmington Thursday, said she's glad to hear the report highlights the need for food, especially for young children.

"It makes [people] more aware that more children are in poverty than what they may know because some of the parents may ... not want people to know that they don't have food to feed their children," Davis said. "Sometimes pride steps in the way."

The combination of risks is greatest for children who experience poverty when they are younger and for those who live in deep and/or persistent poverty.

A two-parent married household earns on average three times the amount a single-parent household earns.

"It's pretty dramatic," Barlow said. "Particularly children who are in single-parent homes are also very at risk for being at poverty at higher rates than those in married parent homes."

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Child poverty

20.6% of Delaware children vs. 21.9 percent in the U.S.

Teen pregnancy

The rate of girls ages 15-17 giving birth continues to go down 18.2 per 1000 in Delaware vs. 19.1 per 1,000 in the U.S.

Infant mortality

The Delaware rate is going up with 8.1 deaths in the first year of life per 1,000 births compared with the national rate of 6.4 deaths in the first year per 1,000 births.

Source: Kids Count report

Kids Count Report released and shows Child Poverty at double last years rate.

EPA Seeks Tighter Rein On Refinery Toxic Air Releases

[Wilmington \(DE\) News Journal](#), May 15, 2014

The Environmental Protection Agency on Thursday proposed its first update in years for toxic air pollution controls at refineries around the nation, including a first-time fenceline monitoring mandate long sought by some Delaware citizen groups.

Federal officials said the measures, including new requirements to limit toxic pollution from storage tanks and open-air emergency incineration flares, would make a "visible difference" in community health.

In January, state officials removed an air monitoring device that had been placed on a utility pole on the Delaware City Refinery's property outside its fence as part of a citizen-led, state subsidized air monitoring project. Company officials said one of their security officers "questioned a local activist" about the device prior to the refinery's call to the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control for its removal.

Story: Soot monitoring device removed at PBF refinery

Environmental groups have long questioned the adequacy of DNREC's air monitoring efforts outside the refinery, pointing out that public odor complaints – sometimes miles away – often follow pollution releases despite company reports of "no offsite impact."

Earlier story: Fire, outage at refinery brings odor complaints

Story: PBF Energy first-quarter earnings triple 2013 mark

"The common-sense steps we are proposing will protect the health of families who live near refineries and will provide them with important information about the quality of the air they breathe," EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy said in a written statement on the proposals.

Fenceline monitoring results will be made public, the agency noted, adding that the changes should have "no noticeable impact" on the cost of products from the nations 150 refineries.

Sierra Club member Amy Roe said she is optimistic that the EPA will approve more-protective requirements for refineries, and said that state citizens "have encouraged the EPA to address serious deficiencies" involving emissions, reporting and community understanding on air quality issues.

But Roe also said she was concerned about regulatory loopholes and state delays in completing major permit review and public participation in decisions.

PBF Energy spokesman Michael Karlovich said Thursday that his company has not yet reviewed the EPA proposals. The American Petroleum Institute has opposed the changes.

"With this proposal, EPA adds to the list of new regulations impacting refineries that come with enormous costs but questionable environmental benefits," Howard Feldman, API director of regulatory and scientific affairs, said in a statement.

Feldman said the EPA "has already concluded the risks associated with refinery emissions are low and the public is protected with an ample margin of safety."

Lisa Garcia, an officer with the national environmental group Earthjustice, said that the public has a right to know what pollutants are crossing refinery boundaries.

"For the EPA to include fenceline monitoring and a fenceline air standard in today's proposal is a very significant step and a win for communities," Garcia said.

In 2012, PBF Energy's Delaware City Refinery ranked 28th nationwide among petroleum industry pipe and smokestack sources of benzene, a known carcinogen, and 73rd for leaks of the same toxic chemical from thousands of valves and other undefined sources. It ranked 29th the same year for releases of toluene, a hazardous pollutant and contributor to smog.

Proposals announced Thursday would include a requirement for fenceline monitoring of benzene emissions. Full approval would cut benzene, toluene and zylene emissions by 5,600 tons a year nationwide, and release of other air pollutants by 52,000 tons per year.

By comparison, EPA records show that Delaware City in 2012 released 9,302 pounds of benzene from permitted and controlled release points in 2012, and 2,332 pounds from undefined leaks.

Delaware City ranked 39th nationwide across the petroleum industry based on its total toxic air release from pipes and smokestacks – 268,266 pounds, with another 9,245 pounds from leaks. But the site was the highest of any petroleum industry site in the country for pounds of toxic pollution discharged to water.

Final standards are scheduled to be released in April, after public hearings in Houston and Los Angeles.

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Railway Trail Plans Unveiled In Lewes

[Wilmington \(DE\) News Journal](#), May 15, 2014

Jay Lagree, an avid cyclist, used to ride his bike from his home in Rehoboth Beach, south along Del. 1 to Bethany and then north again.

But these days, he's shifted his daily ride to the network of trails that link Rehoboth and Lewes.

"I used to ride Route 1," he said. "But it's more dangerous than it needs to be."

Lagree is among the growing number of resort-area residents who use the Breakwater Junction Trail as a link between the two coastal towns.

And Thursday, he came out to look at plans for a 1.5 mile long trail expansion – one that could ultimately grow to 18 miles and link Lewes to Georgetown – along state-owned railroad right-of-way.

That longer east-west trail is just a dream at the moment but state officials on Thursday outlined drawings for Phase I – the small section from Gills Neck Road to Savannah Road in Lewes. That phase, expected to cost \$1.5 million, would include a trail head with restrooms and 30-car parking lot near the proposed new Lewes Library. Eventually, it would provide a second connection with the Breakwater Junction Trail through the proposed Showfield residential housing development.

Maps of the proposed plan were on display at the Lewes Library and state transportation officials and their consultants were available to answer questions for the dozens of people who came out to see where the trail would go and how it would look.

"Over all, I think it's a very good plan," said Lewes Mayor-elect Theodore Becker. "It provides good access and the rails with trails concept is widely used throughout the country."

The state owns the rail line from Lewes to Georgetown – a large right-of-way that includes the train tracks and roadbed along with green space on both sides. The plan, said Marco Boyce, a planning supervisor with the state Department of Transportation, is to carve out a paved, 10-foot wide trail along the open area near the tracks.

There is still train traffic on the rail line but it is infrequent and slow-moving, he said.

On average, three rail cars pass through Lewes once a week, at a speed of about 5 miles per hour, he said. The entire right-of-way is 66 feet, with plenty of room for a 10-foot-wide trail.

State officials envision the trail being used by people running errands, shopping and looking for an alternative to driving their vehicles, Boyce said. The trail will only be open to pedestrians and non-motorized vehicles such as bikes.

The plans on display Thursday were a first step. Public comments will be considered and final plans will be drawn starting in the fall. Meanwhile, state officials are looking for a funding source for the project. It is unlikely that construction would start prior to 2016.

Meanwhile, several of the people who came out to view the plans, live along the second phase of the trail. Many still have questions about access to the trail. In addition, some are concerned about security and screening.

But Thursday, many of them, like Nassau Gardens resident Tom Olkowski, joked that they'd be in assisted living before the trail expanded in to their neighborhood.

"A number of area residents have concerns and others are in favor of it," he said.

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Lawmakers OK Markell's Urban Rebuilding Program

[Wilmington \(DE\) News Journal](#), May 15, 2014

Gov. Jack Markell's plan to revitalize Delaware communities hit by urban blight, crime and economic stagnation cleared the General Assembly after House lawmakers unanimously passed the measure Thursday evening.

The governor's Downtown Development District initiative, which creates as many as 15 Downtown Development Districts eligible for tax credits and other incentives, now awaits his signature. About \$7 million for the program was allocated in bond bill money within Markell's budget.

Since the plan's announcement earlier this year, community leaders from across Delaware have expressed their support and interest in taking part in the program, hoping to use the designations to turn around areas in need of refurbishment, new construction, beautification or redevelopment.

Wilmington officials have said they'd like to identify potential projects as soon as lawmakers approve the program. One council member has said it is perfectly fitted for an initiative in the city's east side. The project would include the refurbishment and construction of more than 100 homes and beautification through the planting of trees and vegetable gardens.

Story: More Delaware children living in poverty

Dover city officials have said the designations could bring some mixed-used developments to the area and tackle vacant lots and buildings.

Rep. Donald Blakey, R-Camden, said he supported the legislation, but wanted to be sure the plan was a redevelopment initiative and not a re-gentrification plan.

"If Dover gets the shot, Queen, Reed, Kirkwood and New Streets are the streets that at one time were gentrified streets for African Americans that have fallen into disrepair," he said. "I want to see that recovered, but not people displaced."

Dover's city planning director, Anne Marie Townsend, allayed those fears, saying the city takes every step possible to ensure anyone displaced by development is connected to services for help.

Municipalities have to apply for the designation, which would first be evaluated by the Cabinet Committee on State Planning Issues. Markell would make the final designations. The governor has said he hopes to release the first round of applications during the summer. The first round would designate one to three districts. Counties could not receive a second designation until all three have a district.

Investors would be entitled to grants administered by the Delaware State Housing Authority valued at up to 20 percent of their construction costs. An investment of at least \$25,000 is needed in a project before the incentives kick in.

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Wilmington To Begin Paying For Its Water Usage

[Wilmington \(DE\) News Journal](#), May 15, 2014

Wilmington residents and others could have to pay more than their fair share for water because the city doesn't pay for service and takes too much from its utilities budget, council leaders said.

Council President Theo Gregory and council budget chairman Bud Freel said the city should start paying for the water it uses, which could provide the utility nearly \$1 million a year. Freel also believes Mayor Dennis P. Williams, who is proposing utility rate increases for customers, is taking too much out of the water fund to cover claimed expenses for city services provided to the utility.

The city, which isn't billed for its water use, plans to start paying into the water and sewer budget by the fiscal year that begins July 1, 2015. The payments that year will only cover 25 percent of that amount. Within four years, the city will pay the full amount.

Freel has taken issue with the city's plan to start paying its water bills next year, arguing payments should start sooner so ratepayers aren't covering all the costs.

"The city's got to pay its fair share of the water and sewer fund," Freel said. "We owe that to all our customers out there who pay water rates, and that's what upsets me."

Council President Theo Gregory said he agrees with Freel's concerns about the city delaying payment on its water bills. He said the current system could cause the water and sewer budget to take a hit in the future and see its bond rating drop.

"This process has to start. We want to make sure our water and sewer enterprise is fiscally sound," Gregory said.

Cleon Cauley, who was recently moved from Public Works commissioner to mayoral chief of staff, issued a written statement saying the city's timeline to start paying its water and sewer bills was set to give the departments adequate time to budget for the new charges. Other reasons he listed including allotting time to evaluate the feasibility of stormwater credits for city properties.

Cauley's statement said the city's payment into the water and sewer fund will soften the level of future rate increases.

Freel doesn't buy the city's reasons for holding off on the payments.

He said council members last year were told the payments would start this past January and then were told that the money would start coming in during the fiscal year starting July 1. Williams recently delayed the start again until July 2015.

"Why is it going to take us another year to do this?" Freel said. "You as a city resident, you don't get that option, do you? It has to be reciprocated."

The Finance Committee on Monday will meet to decide on whether to send Williams' proposed budget, property tax increase and water, sewer and stormwater rate increases to the full council.

Williams is proposing to raise water and sewer rates by 8 percent and stormwater charges by 7 percent, raising the typical customer's monthly bill by \$3.78. A typical customer pays approximately \$574 annually in water, sewer and stormwater bills, according to city figures.

The water and sewer rate increases will raise \$3.2 million, but will, in part, be offset by ongoing drops in water use. That means the total water and sewer revenues of \$46.2 million will only go up by \$323,000.

The stormwater fee increases will raise \$563,000.

Freel said he began pressing the city to start paying water and sewer bills two years ago because the water and sewer budget contributes some money to the general fund, the primary source of money for common city services such as police, fire and parks and recreation.

The water and sewer money that goes into the general fund offsets city costs to support city utilities, according to city documents. That means the water and sewer money pays for utility-related work of city employees mostly paid by the general fund.

For the fiscal year starting July 1, the water and sewer budget will pay \$4.9 million, or about \$500,000 more, into the general fund.

Freel said he finds the general fund's charges to the water and sewer budget a little troubling. He said the water and sewer budget's payment next fiscal year will be bigger because of extra spending from the city. Yet, he said he's not sure if any of that extra spending is tied to supporting utilities.

"You could have the budget of one of those departments go up because of the formula they worked, and the water and sewer fund will still be charged," Freel said. "It's a very difficulty thing to explain. I'm not sure I support the assumption it makes."

Freel said some of the rate increases can be tied to the additional money the water and sewer fund will put into the city's general fund next fiscal year.

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city plan

The city plans to start paying into the water and sewer budget by the fiscal year that begins July 1, 2015. The payments that year will only cover 25

percent. Within four years, the city will pay the full amount .

Officer's Grievance Claims NAACP Pressured Carey

[Wilmington \(DE\) News Journal](#), May 15, 2014

Former Dover mayor Carleton Carey's decisions to select the city's new chief of police and deputy were influenced by the NAACP, according to claims in one of the grievances filed by five high-ranking city police officers.

The grievance, filed by Capt. Robert Scott, is among those claiming Carey violated employment and affirmative action policies and abused his authority by influencing the appointment of a deputy police chief.

The grievances, filed in early April, led to a \$300,000 settlement between the city and the officers. Carey resigned as mayor in late April after council members pressured him to do so.

Earlier story: Former mayor's police meddling to cost Dover \$300,000

Story: NAACP remarks 'not being racist,' Sussex Councilman Wilson says

Scott's grievance claimed Carey met with representatives from the NAACP in late March, several weeks after a Kent County Superior Court grand jury decided not to indict a Dover police officer accused of police brutality during a 2013 arrest.

During the meeting, Carey placed a call to the department, requesting the "African American Demographic by Rank" for the department. He later called Scott asking him to verify the data, the grievance said.

Police Chief Paul M. Bernat named Lt. Marvin Mailey, the former head of the internal affairs unit and an African American, as deputy chief. The selection was made based on race, and did not properly consider other officers holding more years of experience or a higher rank, the officers claim in the grievances.

But both Carey and the NAACP deny the claims.

Carey said Thursday he did meet with the group, but it didn't focus on his selection.

The settlement requires the city to pay four officers – Capt. Tim Stump, Lts. Dan McKeown, Jason Pires and J. Eric Richardson – \$50,000 each by the end of May. Scott will be paid \$100,000, half by the end of this month, the other half in January 2015.

Lamar Gunn, vice president of the NAACP chapter in Dover, said Thursday that someone in the community needs to consider filing an injunction stopping the city from using taxpayer money to pay a settlement based on shoddy allegations.

"I can bet every dollar that I have that if he (Mailey) had complained of discrimination, he would not have received a \$100,000 or \$50,000 pay out, or how about a zero-dollar payout to avoid the cost of litigation," he said.

Gunn said he was not at the meeting described in Scott's grievance, but was involved and briefed on discussions between the parties.

"Mayor Carey is not influenced by the NAACP, please," he said. "That's a joke."

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Minorities Will Like It Here

[Wilmington \(DE\) News Journal](#), May 15, 2014

Despite the recent headlines out of Sussex, most Delawareans think this state is a pretty decent place for racial and ethnic minorities to live.

Delaware came in tied for seventh with Nevada in a Gallup poll published Wednesday, with 87 percent of Delaware residents saying where they live is a good place for minorities.

The 50-state Gallup poll was conducted June-December 2013, with at least 600 residents in each state being questioned.

It's possible some of those 600 Delawareans polled then may want to change their answers now following the antics of a couple of Sussex councilmen Tuesday. The two, Sam Wilson and Vance Phillips, made a show of withholding \$100 grants from an NAACP youth group, saying the NAACP must be involved in discrimination because of its name.

But enough about Wilson and Phillips. We should not paint the rest of Delaware based on those two elected politicians.

After all, we could be in West Virginia. Residents of that state, which has a population that is 93 percent white, came in at the bottom of the list with just 73 percent thinking it was a good place for minorities.

Hawaii (who wouldn't think it was a great place for anyone to live) was at the top of the rankings at 95 percent. Texas, Alaska, New Mexico, Washington, New Jersey, Delaware and Nevada round out the top eight.

All have relatively large minority populations of one race/ethnicity or another, according to the report, but Delaware is the only one with a relatively high black population at 21 percent.

So congratulations Delaware. We may have our dumb and dumber moments, but overall, we should be #delaproud so many of us think this state is a good place for ALL people to live.

Related: 'Racists and bigots and prayer, oh my'

Previous: What makes you feel #delaproud

Share in the Only in Delaware conversation 24/7 on delawareonline. Contact Jeffrey Gentry at jgentry@delawareonline.com. Follow him on Twitter: @jeffreygentry

AstraZeneca And JP Morgan Close \$44M Property Deal

[Wilmington \(DE\) News Journal](#), May 15, 2014

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One of the most-watched office sales deals this year in New Castle County closed today, officials confirmed.

JP Morgan Chase is now the owner of a 58-acre slice of what was formerly part of the AstraZeneca complex on Concord Pike. The deal closed for exactly \$44 million, according to New Castle County officials who received paperwork this afternoon. The transfer tax brought \$660,000 to the county and \$660,000 to the state, according to the county finance office.

JP Morgan expected to occupy the offices beginning in early 2015, according to a statement released today by the company. Earlier this year the deal, and a \$44 million price, was reported by unnamed sources to The News Journal and the Philadelphia Business Journal.

The property will give Chase more room as it grows its Delaware-based employee base. At the same time, AstraZeneca has been trimming its workforce in the state, which lead it to put offices up for sale last year.

"Delaware continues to be a great place to conduct business, and for our employees to live and work. Currently employing more than 7,500 in the state, we have added more than 1,200 jobs over the past two years and expect that number to increase," Chase said in a statement released today.

Chase now owns was known as the AstraZeneca "south campus." The AstraZeneca property is split into a "north campus" and "south campus" by Powder Mill Road, with two bridges – one for pedestrians, the other for vehicles – connecting the two.

"The financial industry's recent growth in our state has created thousands of good jobs for Delawareans and has played an important role in our state's employment growth outpacing the national average," Gov. Jack Markell said in a statement. "JP Morgan Chase has been a big part of that growth. Its purchase of the south campus will ensure that this centrally-located property can continue to be an engine for economic growth and opportunity in our region."

AstraZeneca also sold a nearby high-rise formerly known as the Rollins Building to a firm run by the founder of Allied Bank. The Nemours Foundation recently started moving in to the building as a tenant in what has been renamed the Allied Bank Center.

"The financial industry's recent growth in our state has created thousands of good jobs for Delawareans and has played an important role in our state's employment growth outpacing the national average," Gov. Jack Markell said in a statement. "JP Morgan Chase has been a big part of that growth. Its purchase of the south campus will ensure that this centrally-located property can continue to be an engine for economic growth and opportunity in our region."

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Task Force Pitches Proposal To Cut Workers' Comp Costs

[Wilmington \(DE\) News Journal](#), May 15, 2014

Businesses could cut costs for workers' compensation insurance by a third under a proposal released Wednesday by a panel led by Lt. Gov. Matt Denn.

The changes recommended by the Workers' Compensation Task Force ask lawmakers to rein in premiums that businesses pay for the insurance. Denn and other state officials have argued that rate increases have spiraled out of control in recent years.

One proposal caps what Delaware's health providers can charge for treating job injuries and adopting a new fee schedule for services. The group, which includes lawmakers, labor and business leaders and health-care representatives, also recommended creating a new panel to help increase oversight of insurance carriers. Another proposal would consider replacing the representative for insurance carriers that participates in premium-setting negotiations with state regulators.

"If these changes are approved by the General Assembly and the governor, they will easily be the largest savings and medical costs of any type in the recent history of our state," said Denn, the task force's chairman. "It's our hope and our expectation that reforms of this magnitude will result in a real cut in workers' compensation premiums. That is something our business community wants and that our business community deserves."

The changes, approved by the task force on a 19 to one vote, will be offered as legislation in June. One of two representatives of the Medical Society of Delaware on the task force voted against the recommendations because the panel rejected higher reimbursement rates for hospitals and stand-alone surgical centers that were built into the formula to bring medical costs down by 33 percent.

Task-force members determined that nearly 70 percent of a businesses' workers comp bill is associated with medical costs. The Health Care Advisory Panel created a new medical fee schedule based on Medicare costs for individual procedures and caps the maximum reimbursement for any workers' compensation treatment, except radiology and surgery, at no more than 200 percent of the Medicare reimbursement. Radiology procedures would be no more than 250 percent, and the maximum compensation for surgery would not exceed 300 percent.

The current fee schedule is not uniformly set across the board, Denn said.

The state's medical society said in a release that it supports the fee schedule, recognizing that "immediate action is needed to reign in" workers' compensation costs in the state. But the group cautioned that the cap should not be seen as the sole solution to the state's workers compensation problems.

"Setting caps on physician and hospital reimbursements represents, at best, a short-term remedy, as the underlying systemic issues have not been adequately identified or addressed by the Task Force," the release said. "We urge the task force to take a more measured, comprehensive approach to workers' compensation reform to assure the ongoing quality and access to care for our state's injured workers."

Representatives from labor groups and the state chamber of commerce who served on the task force praised the ideas.

"I know we have something that will reduce rates, but I know we will have to be back again," said Rich Heffron, president of the Delaware State Chamber of Commerce.

Associated Press Reporter Randall Chase contributed to this story. Contact Jon Offredo at (302) 678-4271 or at joffredo@delawareonline.com or on Twitter @jonoffredo.

Fast-food Workers Demand Higher Wages

[Wilmington \(DE\) News Journal](#), May 15, 2014

Dozens of fast-food workers in the Wilmington area left their jobs Thursday to take part in protests calling for an increase in the national minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour.

The protests, which occurred at the McDonald's at 700 W. Fourth St. and the Peter Spencer Plaza across from the city/county building, contributed to a nationwide call among minimum wage earners to increase their pay to \$15 per hour.

Similar protests occurred in more than 100 cities nationwide, according to the groups who organized the Wilmington events.

"This should have been done a long time ago," said Patrick Adzadu, who's with the Delaware Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers.

"America can't go hungry. Nobody wants to be on food stamps. We can't be working for people and not be able to feed ourselves."

Related: More Delaware children living in poverty

Adzadu said his group deals with minimum wage workers on a daily basis and helps them find food, housing and other needs.

While studying at Cheyney University in Pennsylvania in 2001, he worked at Burger King earning \$7.25, an amount he said is too low given the increase in costs and services.

"If they're still getting that, it's not fair," he said. "Even if they raise it to more than what it is now, it's a start. We're not specifically saying it has to be \$15. If they do \$10, then maybe raise it to \$11, \$12, maybe it's enough."

Business groups and small-business owners have argued that raising the state's minimum wage could cost jobs and damage the state's still-sluggish economic recovery.

Business lobbyists have said that the increased costs would come on top of higher workers' compensation rates, higher federal taxes to replenish the unemployment trust fund and the costs of complying with President Barack Obama's health care law.

They also worry that higher-wage earners would demand raises if lawmakers raise the minimum wage.

The workers who protested in Wilmington on Thursday came from at least a dozen fast-food restaurants, including Kentucky Friend Chicken, McDonald's and Wendy's, according to an official with the regional 32BJ Services Employee International Union, one of the groups that organized the protests.

Poll: Should the minimum wage be raised?

Locally, Philadelphia and New Castle County have each taken steps to boost the minimum wage for some workers. Beginning July 1, New Castle County employees who earn minimum wage will begin earning \$10.10 an hour, up from \$7.25 an hour.

Philadelphia voters on May 20 will decide on whether to they want to allow airport workers and subcontracted workers who receive taxpayer money to earn at least \$10.88 an hour.

In January, Gov. Jack Markell signed into law a minimum wage increase for the state. The wage will increase by 50 cents, to \$7.75, on June 1. It will jump to \$8.25 on June 1, 2015.

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Kullman Argues For Ethanol Requirements

[Wilmington \(DE\) News Journal](#), May 15, 2014

DuPont CEO Ellen Kullman told an industry conference on Tuesday how important it is to renew the Renewable Fuel Standard, which helps the company sell its ethanol products.

Ethanol is made from corn, but DuPont has been working to produce and promote a next-generation biofuel, cellulosic ethanol, which is made from corn stover, or the leaves and stalks left over after the corn is harvested.

DuPont hopes to finish its \$225 million Iowa plant by the third quarter of this year. It will make 30 million gallons per year, to help satisfy federal mandates for ethanol blending into gasoline.

In 2007, the EPA set a goal of 36 billion gallons of ethanol planned to be blended into gasoline by 2022. This year, that number was scheduled to be 18.15 billion gallons, including an increasing amount of cellulosic ethanol. The EPA is reconsidering this amount.

Kullman gave a keynote speech at the 11th Annual World Congress on Industrial Biotechnology.

“Legislative and regulatory uncertainty has a direct impact on the growth of this industry,” Kullman said. “If the EPA issues an RFS rule with increasing biofuels volumes, supporting a stable regulatory environment, our industry can thrive.”

“So let me state clearly: the Renewable Fuel Standard works and Congress and the administration need to ensure its stability. This will bring a reduced reliance on fossil fuels, increased energy security, many more rural jobs and much needed environmental benefits.”

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL EDITORIALS

Sussex County Needs Leadership, Not Jokes About Race

[Wilmington \(DE\) News Journal](#), May 15, 2014

Sussex County Council members have a rather odd way of starting a conversation.

It is one thing to disagree with a group’s actions, its goals or even its members. It is something completely different to make a fuss about an organization’s name, especially an organization that has been around for more than 105 years and has been involved in some of the most important civil rights battles in American history.

Sussex County Councilman Sam Wilson managed to do just with the dismissal of the Lower Sussex Branch NAACP Youth Council’s request for a small grant.

“What’s NAACP stand for?” he asked in the middle of a council meeting.

A polite “no thank you” to the grant request would have sufficed. Instead Mr. Wilson chose to touch on some racial hot buttons, dwelling on the term “colored people” in the group’s title and then later

elaborating on an imaginary group for the advancement of white people and what a hard time it would have in today's world.

All of this was done in a mock innocent style so that any criticism of his comments could be dismissed as reverse racism. Of course, the NAACP was forced to explain its name and membership while Mr. Wilson's intended audience got to chuckle at his daring wit.

It is a way of starting up an argument and slipping out before the fighting starts.

Of course, if there really wasn't a wink-and-a-nod tone to his question "What's the NAACP stand for?" then Mr. Wilson displayed an appalling ignorance of American, Delaware and Sussex County history.

On the other hand, if he wanted to start a genuine discussion of racial relations in Sussex County today, why wasn't he more straightforward? Why didn't he actually engage people who see our society differently than he does? Why couldn't he enter into a genuine give-and-take conversation with people who are his constituents?

Why didn't he ask a question and wait for an answer instead of wiggling away?

Instead, he left the job of explaining and defending to others.

We are on the eve of the 60th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the famous school desegregation cases that involved Delaware.

As a society and a state, we have made progress. Yet racial disparities persist. Our economic system is undergoing such tremendous stress and change that many Americans are worried about social mobility and inequality, all of which exacerbate those racial tensions.

Now is a good time for a genuine conversation about our differences. Now is a time for a discussion of solutions, whether from the right or the left.

Now is a time for elected officials willing to lead, not just wisecrack.

Sixty Years After Brown And Still A Long Way To Go

[Wilmington \(DE\) News Journal](#), May 15, 2014

Saturday marks the 60th anniversary of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. Delaware was included in the *Brown* decision. It was one of the states, mostly from the deep South, that mandated racial segregation in its public schools, i.e., de jure segregation. In the infamous decision, *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the U.S. Supreme Court had upheld de jure segregation if the separate facilities were "equal."

The 1954 *Brown* decision declared de jure segregation unconstitutional. In the second *Brown* decision, in 1955, which focused on the remedy for de jure segregation, the Supreme Court ordered the affected states to desegregate their public schools "with all deliberate speed." Delaware, like many other states, focused on the deliberate more than the speed part of the order.

In 1971, black parents in Wilmington, joined later by the Wilmington School Board, renewed a lawsuit filed in the mid-1950s to implement the promise of *Brown*, arguing the Wilmington schools had never been desegregated despite *Brown* and Court rulings. After years of contentious litigation, the Wilmington plaintiffs prevailed against the suburban New Castle County school districts and the state of Delaware. The Courts ruled the city schools were indeed segregated as a result of state action.

COLUMN: Delaware's role in desegregation

COLUMN: Teaching young people about *Brown v. Board*'s legacy

A single northern New Castle County school district was formed and the District Court ordered busing across city-suburban lines. In 1981, the single district was divided into the four northern New Castle County districts that exist today. By the end of the 1980s, Delaware was considered a national

model for desegregated schools, and, later, Delaware was cited as one of the two states having the most desegregated public schools in the nation.

In 1995, after a series of Supreme Court decisions weakening the requirements for districts to be declared “unitary” and thus no longer required to implement components of a school desegregation remedy, the four districts and state convinced the Court to declare the districts unitary. With the passage of the Neighborhood Schools Act in April 2000, the districts had to assign students to the nearest neighborhood school or justify a deviation from this requirement based on hardship. Critics of the law vigorously argued segregated schools would be the inevitable consequence. Experience shows the critics were right.

In 2014, 60 years after the first Brown decision, many things have changed in northern New Castle County’s public schools, but school segregation has returned to Wilmington. As backdrop, the demographics of the public schools have changed. The white percentage across all public schools, including charters, is 43.4 percent in the county while the African-American percentage is 35 percent, Latino/Hispanic 15 percent, and Asian 4.6 percent. White students are a bare majority in Brandywine and about 45 percent in Red Clay and only about one-third of the students in Colonial and Christina.

Outside of Wilmington, more integrated housing patterns and continued busing of middle- and high-school students into suburban schools has supported desegregation. African-American superintendents, principals and teachers are found in suburban as well as city schools.

However, the city’s schools – both charters and traditional schools – especially at the elementary level, have become segregated again, with overwhelming majorities of minority and low-income children. For example, Christina’s four city elementary schools have 63 white students among almost 1,500 students. In the four inner-city charters, only 7 white students were counted in the 2012-13 school year out of over 1,500 students.

The causes of school segregation are complex. Housing segregation, more based on economics than race, plays a role, keeping many minorities in the city. Charters and choice have given both blacks and whites options that have increased segregation. Moreover, many people and organizations are concerned that limits on who can attend certain charter schools affect individual choice and accelerates segregation by race and class.

Should we care that school segregation has returned, at least in Wilmington, especially if some of this is by individual choice rather than by overtly racist laws? We believe we should. Success in our society increasingly will be for those who can participate in a multicultural environment. Research has shown that teachers prefer to work in schools that are not segregated by race, economic status or limited in student academic achievement. No, an African-American student does not need to sit next to a white student to learn, but desegregated schools by race and class tend to ensure higher academic success for all students in attendance.

Many have now recognized that the United States will need all its citizens to succeed in school to remain a prosperous democracy in the decades ahead. Most significantly, Brown was as much about ending America’s Jim Crow – a system which stigmatized and demeaned one race – as it was about improving educational opportunity for African-Americans. The Brown decision was not the end, but the beginning, of our challenge.

Jeff Raffel, Helen Foss and Joseph Rosenthal were all involved in the desegregation effort in New Castle County dating back to the early 1970s. They are also current or former board members of the American Civil Liberties Union of Delaware, which continues to work to fulfill the promise of Brown.

VICE PRESIDENTIAL *News Clips*

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BIDEN IN THE NEWS

Biden Cautions China In Its Dispute With Vietnam

[Associated Press](#), May 16, 2014

WASHINGTON — Vice President Joe **Biden** is conveying America's objections about China's behavior in a territorial dispute with Vietnam to the top brass of the Chinese military.

Biden met Thursday with Fang Fenghui, the military's general chief of staff. The White House says **Biden** told Fang the U.S. was seriously concerned about China's unilateral actions.

Biden told Fang the U.S. doesn't take a side in the territorial confrontation between the two countries over an area in the South China Sea. That's where China has triggered protests in Vietnam by deploying an oil rig in the long-disputed seas. One person has been killed, a Chinese worker in Vietnam.

But **Biden** says no nation should take provocative steps in the conflict that undermine stability and peace.

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Biden Refinances Mortgage But Obama Stands Pat

By Jeffrey Sparshott

[Wall Street Journal](#), May 16, 2014

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

Obamas Had Up To \$7 Million In Assets In '13, Records Show

By Jada F. Smith

[New York Times](#), May 16, 2014

The assets of President Obama and his wife, Michelle, were valued as high as \$7 million last year, according to a financial disclosure form released by the White House on Thursday.

Most of the president's income came from royalties on his three books and investments made possible by the proceeds. His memoir, "Dreams From My Father," published in 1995, continued to make the most money for Mr. Obama, generating between \$50,001 and \$100,000 in royalties, according to the disclosure form. "The Audacity of Hope," from 2006, earned between \$15,001 and \$50,000, and "Of Thee I Sing: A Letter to My Daughters," released in 2010, earned between \$5,001 and \$15,000.

Sales from Mr. Obama's books have decreased steadily every year since he took office as president, according to the disclosure forms the White House has released.

Treasury notes held jointly by the president and Mrs. Obama are their most valuable assets, worth between \$1 million and \$5 million. The forms only require the Obamas to list their assets and income in wide ranges, leaving it difficult to discern the exact amount of the couple's worth in 2013.

Vice President Joseph R. **Biden** Jr.'s publishing career earned him considerably less than the president's totals. "Promises to Keep," released in 2007, earned less than \$201 in royalties last year, according to Mr. **Biden**'s financial disclosure form, also released on Thursday.

The Obamas' 2013 tax returns, released in April, showed they paid \$98,169 in federal taxes on \$481,098 in adjusted gross income. The Bidens paid \$96,378 in taxes on an adjusted gross income of \$407,009.

The Obama administration was the first to publish financial disclosure reports online. High-ranking government officials have been required to release their financial information since passage of the Ethics in Government Act of 1978.

"Neither the president nor the vice president have any conflicts of interest, and their reports have been reviewed and certified by the independent Office of Government Ethics," Jay Carney, the White House press secretary, said in a statement. "We are continuing this administration's practice of posting these forms online here in the interests of transparency."

Obamas' Assets Worth Between \$1.8 Million And \$7 Million, Financial Forms Show

By Lindsay Wise

[McClatchy](#), May 16, 2014

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama held assets worth between \$1.8 million and \$7 million last year, including between \$1 million and \$5 million in U.S. treasury notes, according to financial disclosure forms released by the White House on Thursday.

The treasury notes were the First Family's largest single asset in 2013, but the Obamas also reported between \$70,000 and \$165,000 in income from book royalties, up to \$250,000 in a Vanguard retirement fund, and between \$200,000 and \$400,000 in college savings plans.

The disclosure forms show that the Obamas still owe between \$500,000 and \$1 million on a 30 year mortgage for their home in Chicago, Illinois, with an interest rate of more than 5.6 percent. The couple does not appear to have refinanced since 2005.

Federal law requires the president, vice president and other high-level officials to submit their finances annually for review by the Office of Government Ethics. The forms list assets in ranges of hundreds of thousands of dollars, not exact amounts.

Ethics officials did not find any conflicts of interest in the 2013 reports submitted by Obama or Vice President Joe **Biden**, the White House said.

Obama's Assets Estimated At \$2 Million To \$7 Million

By David Jackson

[USA Today](#), May 16, 2014

President Obama and first lady Michelle Obama listed assets valued at about \$2 million to \$7 million, according to a financial disclosure report released Thursday.

Vice President **Biden** also filed his annual financial disclosure statement and listed assets valued at \$276,000 to \$940,000, including a rental property owned jointly with his wife, Jill.

"The Ethics in Government Act of 1978 requires high-level federal officials to publicly disclose their personal financial interests," said a White House blog post by spokesman Jay Carney. "The public filing system serves to prevent financial conflicts of interest by providing for a systematic review of the finances of government officials."

Presidents and other officeholders are required to list assets, but the form provides wide ranges on the values of those assets.

In declaring "U.S. Treasury notes," Obama checked the box valuing them at \$1,000,001 to \$5 million.

In addition to various bank accounts, index funds and college savings plans, Obama declared royalties from his books *Dreams From My Father*, *The Audacity of Hope* and *Of Thee I Sing: A Letter To My Daughters*.

The asset ranges added up to \$1.95 million to \$7.15 million for the president.

The Obamas listed only one liability, the mortgage on their home in Chicago.

Obamas List Assets Between \$1.8M And \$7M

By

[Associated Press](#), May 16, 2014

President Barack Obama and first lady Michelle Obama reported assets worth between \$1.8 million and \$7 million for last year, little changed from their previous year's holdings, according to financial disclosure forms released Thursday.

The forms, required by law, permit public officials to list their assets in broad ranges. As a result, a precise net worth is difficult to ascertain.

The forms show the largest jointly owned assets by the president and the first lady were Treasury notes worth between \$1 million and \$5 million. While the value of their assets is certainly higher than that of most Americans, their mix reflects the financial demands of a 50-something couple with two daughters. Their assets include Vanguard retirement funds and college savings plans.

Royalties in 2013 from Obama's books, "*Dreams From My Father*," "*The Audacity of Hope*" and "*Of Thee I Sing*," totaled between \$70,000 and \$165,000. In 2011, they totaled between \$250,000 and \$2.1 million.

The Obamas also have a 30-year mortgage on their Chicago home worth between \$500,000 and \$1 million with an interest rate of 5.625 percent.

Vice President Joe **Biden** reported 2013 assets of between \$276,000 and \$940,000, including a rental property owned jointly with his wife, Jill, in Wilmington, Delaware.

Unlike the Obamas, **Biden** has taken advantage of lower mortgage rates and refinanced his mortgage last year. He listed a 30-year mortgage on his principal residence and his rental property worth between \$500,000 and \$1 million with an interest rate of 3.375 percent.

Biden also reported making \$25,000 donations to each of two Pennsylvania anti-domestic violence groups. The \$50,000 came from an award **Biden** received from the Pennsylvania Society, which honored **Biden** last year with its gold medal for distinguished achievement.

Last month, the Obamas released their 2013 tax returns and reported paying \$98,169 in taxes on \$481,098 in adjusted income.

The Bidens reported paying \$96,378 in federal taxes last year on adjusted gross income of \$407,009.

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As Author, Biden Distant Second To Obama

'Promises to Keep' '13 royalties under \$201

By Ben Wolfgang

[Washington Times](#), May 16, 2014

Vice President Joseph R. **Biden**'s success as an author pales in comparison to that of his boss, according to financial records released Thursday by the White House.

Financial disclosure reports for both Mr. **Biden** and President Obama, required by law each year, detail the investments and outside income for both men.

The documents show Mr. Obama continues to enjoy royalties from his three books. “Dreams From My Father” generated between \$50,001 and \$100,000 for the president last year, while “The Audacity of Hope” pulled in between \$15,001 and \$50,000, according to the records.

The president’s other work, “Of Thee I Sing: A Letter To My Daughters,” brought in between \$5,001 and \$15,000 in royalties.

By contrast, Mr. **Biden** made less than \$201 last year from his memoir, “Promises To Keep,” the records show.

The president, vice president and other high-ranking government officials are required to submit the reports each year under the 1978 Ethics in Government Act. The act is meant to ensure no officials have financial conflicts of interest.

“Neither the president nor the vice president has any conflicts of interest, and their reports have been reviewed and certified by the independent Office of Government Ethics,” White House press secretary Jay Carney said Thursday. “We are continuing this administration’s practice of posting these forms online here in the interests of transparency.”

The full Obama and **Biden** reports are available online.

Obama Lists Assets Worth Up To \$7.15 Mln

[Reuters](#), May 16, 2014

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

Biden Refinances, Gets Super-Low Mortgage Rates

[Roll Call](#), May 16, 2014

Vice President Joseph R. **Biden** Jr. refinanced his home and two home equity lines of credit in 2013, securing super-low mortgage rates that will save him thousands of dollars a year.

Biden was generally been among the poorer senators, but his family finances appear to have improved of late, judging by a review of his financial disclosure forms.

In 2013, he paid off a mortgage on his Delaware home with a 4.625 percent interest rate with a new, 30-year mortgage with a super-low 3.375 percent rate from TD Bank, which has a Canadian parent company.

The mortgage is somewhere between \$500,000 and \$1 million, and includes a rental property. Saving 1.25 percent on \$500,000 would amount to more than \$6,000 in savings a year, although after-tax savings would be less because of the mortgage interest deduction.

He also paid off two home equity lines of credit each worth more than \$100,000 and took out a new home equity line of credit worth more than \$250,000.

The old home equity lines featured interest rates of 4.49 percent and a prime interest rate, respectively.

The new home equity line features a super-low 2.75 percent interest rate and a 20-year term, also from TD Bank. That should save **Biden** thousands more each year.

Biden, 71, would be more than 100 years old when the 30-year mortgage is paid off, if it isn’t paid off early.

Obama, meanwhile, continues to pay above-market interest rates on his mortgage on his Chicago home — 5.625 percent. We noted a few years back that while Obama had urged a massive refinancing program to bolster the economy, he hadn't yet taken advantage of low interest rates to refinance himself.

Obamas Diverge With Bidens On Mortgage Refinancing

By Mike Dorning

[Bloomberg News](#), May 16, 2014

President Barack Obama, who has encouraged homeowners to refinance their mortgages to take advantage of lower interest rates, hasn't taken his own advice.

Obama, 52, and first lady Michelle Obama, 50, are still making payments on the same mortgage they took out when they purchased their Chicago residence in 2005 at an interest rate of 5.625 percent, according to a disclosure form released today. The form also showed little change in the family's finances from last year.

Vice President Joe **Biden** didn't pass up the mortgage opportunity, refinancing the debt on his Wilmington, Delaware, home at a 3.375 percent interest rate, according to his disclosure form.

The average rate offered on typical 30-year mortgages fell to a six-month low of 4.2 percent this week from a 2013 high of 4.58 percent in August, according to Freddie Mac surveys. Borrowing costs are up from a record low 3.31 percent in November 2012.

White House spokesman Bobby Whitehouse declined to comment on the president's mortgage.

The disclosure forms offer an annual glimpse at the elected leaders' finances, showing the first family to be worth between \$2 million and \$7.2 million. That doesn't include the value of their Chicago home, which the real estate web site Zillow.com estimates at \$2.1 million.

In addition to his \$400,000 annual salary, the president received between \$70,000 and \$165,000 in royalties last year from his three books.

The only debt the Obamas listed was their home mortgage, with a remaining balance between \$500,000 and \$1 million, according to the form, which lists the values of assets and liabilities in broad ranges.

Biden, 71, and his wife, Jill, 62, are of more modest means, listing assets valued between \$276,000 and \$943,000, not including the vice president's Delaware residence. Zillow.com estimates the Bidens' home to be worth \$1.4 million. **Biden** lists debts totaling between \$630,000 and \$1.6 million.

The Obamas have placed their wealth in a politically and financially cautious portfolio.

The bulk of the first family's money is invested in U.S. Treasury debt. The Obamas have between \$1 million and \$5 million in Treasury notes, which have a maturity between one year and 10 years. They also listed between \$250,000 and \$500,000 in Treasury bills, which have a maturity of one year or less.

In addition to the president's pension from the Illinois state legislature, where he served as a lawmaker, the Obamas listed three retirement accounts invested in the Vanguard 500 Index Fund (VFINX), with a combined balance between \$300,000 and \$750,000. The funds mimic the performance of the benchmark Standard & Poor's 500 stock index, which returned 32.36 percent last year.

The Obamas have set aside money for college costs for their two daughters, Malia, 15 and Sasha, 12. They reported having between \$200,000 and \$400,000 in tax-advantaged 529 college savings accounts.

The Obamas also ended the year with a combined balance \$151,000 and \$365,000 in three checking accounts at JPMorgan Chase & Co. and Northern Trust Corp. The first lady has her own checking account; the president doesn't.

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Following The Clintons, The Bidens Cash In On Ukraine

By Innokenty (kes) Grekov

[Huffington Post](#), May 16, 2014

Perhaps Hunter **Biden** doesn't get his marching orders from the White House, nor does he carry enough swag to influence U.S.-Ukrainian relations. None of this will matter as the White House suffered another foreign-policy setback when Joe **Biden**'s youngest son joined the board of directors of Ukraine's largest oil company.

Joe **Biden** visited Ukraine in April, reiterating Washington's support for the interim government in Kyiv. It looks like Hunter **Biden** will travel there often to carry out his duties for Burisma Holdings, a leading Ukrainian energy company incorporated in Cyprus.

Companies operating headquartered in Cyprus have long been the butt of jokes in Russia and Ukraine, as money-laundering schemes prevail in those murky Mediterranean waters, allowing big-ticket oligarchs and minor crooks and thieves alike to operate their corrupt schemes with no oversight and very little transparency. There's a lot of Russian money in Cyprus, folks.

Hunter **Biden** is mainly known as a lawyer and investor, but he is also an advocate for humanitarian causes and even a HuffPost blogger. He also sits on the Advisory Board for the National Democratic Institute (NDI), a D.C.-based outlet that runs democracy promotion and civil society development programs all over the world, including Ukraine. NDI is chiefly funded by the U.S. government, and the Kremlin's contempt for organizations like this is well-documented: after USAID's forced departure from Moscow, NDI moved its staff out of Russia. According to senior State Department official Victoria Nuland, U.S. government's democracy programming in Ukraine, run through organizations like NDI, cost U.S. taxpayers 5 billion dollars since the fall of the Soviet Union.

The Kremlin must be well aware of Hunter **Biden**'s family ties (duh!) and NDI credentials. No matter what the White House says about the inability of Joe **Biden** to influence his son's work in Ukraine, the U.S. government has already lost this PR battle. Just as Washington is unable to persuade the American people that the United States has national security interests in Ukraine; nobody in Europe, Russia, or Ukraine will believe that there is no conflict of interest in Hunter **Biden**'s appointment.

There are more intriguing connections between Ukrainian oligarchs and U.S. elites. In February, the New York Times profiled the relationship between Bill and Hillary Clinton and steel magnate Victor Pinchuk, who was in frequent contact with Hillary Clinton's State Department, for more than a decade paid a hefty \$40,000 monthly retainer to a Bill Clinton-affiliated DC lobbyist, and donated roughly 13.1 million to the Bill, Hillary, & Chelsea Clinton Foundation.

Steelworkers in Pennsylvania and Ohio are vocally unhappy about this relationship, and American steel makers are currently pursuing a case alleging:

Ukraine – and by extension Mr. Pinchuk's company, Interpipe Ltd. – and eight other countries had illegally dumped a type of steel tube used in natural gas extraction, an industry whose growth has provided one of the few bright spots in the United States manufacturing sector.

The Clintons' involvement with Mr. Pinchuk and the appointment of Hunter **Biden** adds to the Kremlin's arsenal of weapons for the "information war" between Russia and the West, which the Kremlin is winning by a landslide right now. It's winning the real war, too.

4 Things In The Obamas' Financial Disclosure

[CNN](#), May 15, 2014

The president earns a salary of \$400,000 for his day job.

The Obamas were worth between \$2 million and \$7 million in 2013.

While about the same as the previous year, that's down considerably from 2010, when they were worth between \$2.8 million and \$11.8 million.

The financial disclosures use broad financial ranges, making more precise accounting impossible.

1. They own mostly Treasuries.

Much of their wealth – between \$1 million and \$5 million of assets – is invested in U.S. Treasury securities.

2. They don't pay the lowest mortgage rates

They pay a mortgage interest rate of 5.6% on their home in Chicago. That compares to an average mortgage interest rate this week of 4.2%.

3. Malia and Sasha don't have to take loans for college

They have between \$200,000 and \$400,000 stashed away in 529 college savings plans for their daughters Malia and Sasha.

4. President's books not bestsellers anymore

Over the years, most of the Obamas' wealth has come from the President's bestselling books "Dreams from my Father" and "Audacity of Hope."

However in 2013, a lot fewer books were sold. Royalties from those sales came in no more than \$165,000, a far cry from \$1.1 million in 2010, according to the disclosure.

The president earns a salary of \$400,000 for his day job.

Last month, the Obama's federal income tax showed joint income of \$481,098. They paid \$98,169 in total tax.

Vice President Joe **Biden** and his wife were worth between \$276,000 and \$943,000.

In 2013, they refinanced property and locked a lower mortgage interest rate of 3.375%, down from their previous rate of 4.62%, on their home which is worth up to \$1 million. The Bidens also refinanced a home equity loan rate down to 2.75% from 4.49%.

Fallen Las Vegas Police Officer Remembered At U.S. Capitol

[Las Vegas Review-Journal](#), May 16, 2014

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

Fallen Arkansas Officers Honored At US Capitol

[Arkansas News](#), May 16, 2014

WASHINGTON — During a national memorial service for fallen officers, Vice President Joe **Biden** spoke of the bravery of two heroes from Arkansas who did not hesitate when duty called.

With the U.S. Capitol behind him, **Biden** delivered keynote remarks to the mothers, fathers, wives, husbands and children of the fallen as well as hundreds of officers from across the nation attending the memorial.

In praising the fallen heroes, **Biden** recalled the bravery of Scott County Sheriff Cody Carpenter and Wildlife Officer Joel Campora who drowned while assisting victims of an overnight flash flood along the Fourche Lefave River in Arkansas last May.

"Jumping into flooded waters ... not one of them hesitated," **Biden** said.

He did not mention their names but there was no doubt who he meant — at least not for the widows of Campora and Carpenter in attendance at the memorial service.

“It hit really close,” said Amie Carpenter after the ceremony.

Rebecca Campora said she appreciated that **Biden** had taken time to get to know at least some of the stories behind the more than 100 officers who died in the line of duty in 2013.

“This wasn’t just a canned speech,” she said.

A National Peace Officers Memorial Service is held every May 15 at the U.S. Capitol to honor those who lost their life in the line of duty in the previous year. The memorial service culminates a week-long commemoration that also includes a candlelight vigil at the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial.

The names of nine fallen officers from Arkansas were added to the memorial this week — six who died in 2013 and three others. Sens. Mark Pryor, D-Ark., and John Boozman, R-Ark., also issued statements this week to honor the Arkansas officers.

Theresa Johnson of Clarksville was overwhelmed by the attention she and other family survivors received during the week.

“We were met at the airport with escort officers and then had a motorcade to the hotel. They blocked intersections and traffic would be stopped and there were officers standing and saluting. It was amazing,” she said.

Her husband, Larry Johnson, was director of the Fifth Judicial District Drug Task Force. He died last March after suffering a heart attack while chasing a suspect.

“To hear his name called today and see all these people I know he didn’t die in vain and he will be remembered,” Theresa Johnson said.

The nine Arkansans whose names were added to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial aside from Campora, Carpenter and Johnson were:

—Conway Police Officer William McGary, who died in February after being hit by an intoxicated driver while directing traffic at the scene of an accident.

—Sebastian County deputy Terry Johnson, who died in March in a car accident.

—Faulkner County deputy Hans Fifer, who died in April of a heart attack while trying out with the agency’s SWAT team.

—Fayetteville Assistant Police Chief Elmo Ritchie, who died in October 1968 after suffering a heart attack while attempting to place an individual in custody.

—Texarkana patrolman Richard Choate, who died after being shot six times by a robbery suspect in May 1922.

—Constable Will Dalton of Rogers, who was shot and killed attempting to arrest two robbery suspects in January 1891.

Fallen Arkansas Officers Honored At U.S. Capitol

[Fort Smith \(AR\) Times Record](#), May 16, 2014

WASHINGTON — During a national memorial service for fallen officers, Vice President Joe **Biden** spoke of the bravery of two heroes from Arkansas who did not hesitate when duty called.

With the U.S. Capitol behind him, **Biden** delivered keynote remarks to the mothers, fathers, wives, husbands and children of the fallen as well as hundreds of officers from across the nation attending the memorial.

In praising the fallen heroes, **Biden** recalled the bravery of Scott County Sheriff Cody Carpenter and Wildlife Officer Joel Campora, who drowned while assisting victims of an overnight flash flood along the Fourche Lefave River in Arkansas last May.

“Jumping into flooded waters ... not one of them hesitated,” **Biden** said.

He did not mention their names, but there was no doubt who he meant — at least not for the widows of Campora and Carpenter in attendance at the memorial service.

“It hit really close,” said Amie Carpenter after the ceremony.

Rebecca Campora said she appreciated that **Biden** had taken time to get to know at least some of the stories behind the more than 100 officers who died in the line of duty in 2013.

“This wasn’t just a canned speech,” she said.

A National Peace Officers Memorial Service is held every May 15 at the U.S. Capitol to honor those who lost their life in the line of duty in the previous year. The memorial service culminates a weeklong commemoration that also includes a candlelight vigil at the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial.

The names of nine fallen officers from Arkansas were added to the memorial this week — six who died in 2013 and three others. Sens. Mark Pryor, D-Ark., and John Boozman, R-Ark., also issued statements this week to honor the Arkansas officers.

Theresa Johnson of Clarksville was overwhelmed by the attention she and other family survivors received during the week.

“We were met at the airport with escort officers and then had a motorcade to the hotel. They blocked intersections and traffic would be stopped and there were officers standing and saluting. It was amazing,” she said.

Her husband, Larry Johnson, was director of the Fifth Judicial District Drug Task Force. He died last March after suffering a heart attack while chasing a suspect.

“To hear his name called today and see all these people I know he didn’t die in vain and he will be remembered,” Theresa Johnson said.

The Arkansans whose names were added to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial aside from Campora, Carpenter and Johnson were:

- Conway Police Officer William McGary, who died in February 2013 after being hit by an intoxicated driver while directing traffic at the scene of an accident.
- Sebastian County deputy Cpl. Terry Johnson, who died in March 2013 in a car accident.
- Faulkner County deputy Hans Fifer, who died in April 2013 of a heart attack while trying out with the agency’s SWAT team.
- Fayetteville Assistant Police Chief Elmo Ritchie, who died in October 1968 after suffering a heart attack while attempting to place an individual in custody.
- Texarkana patrolman Richard Choate, who died after being shot six times by robbery suspect in May 1922.
- Constable Will Dalton of Rogers, who was shot and killed attempting to arrest to robbery suspects on January 1891.

Thousands Of Fallen Officers, Including Jason Ellis, Honored In

[WDRB-TV Louisville \(KY\)](#), May 16, 2014

WASHINGTON, D.C. (WDRB) – It’s National Police Week and thousands of law enforcement officers have gathered in the nation’s capital to honor those killed in the line of duty. Newly added to the memorial wall this year is Bardstown’s own Jason Ellis, who was murdered in May 2013.

The 33rd annual National Peace Officer's Memorial Service started at 11 a.m. and ended around 1 p.m. on the West Front of the United States Capitol in Washington, D.C.

National Police Week draws 25,000 to 40,000 people each year. Officers come from departments throughout the United States and around the world.

Thousands of fallen police officers were honored at our nation's Capitol Thursday, including Bardstown's own Jason Ellis.

It has been almost a year since Officer Ellis was gunned down, and while police still don't know who's responsible, his name has a permanent resting place in Washington.

With the U.S. Capitol visible behind him, U.S. Vice President Joe **Biden** spoke during the memorial service, acknowledging the bravery of the officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty.

During Thursday's ceremony, 112 fallen officers were honored, including Bardstown Police Officer Jason Ellis.

A Wreath Laying Ceremony will be held immediately following the Memorial Service at the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial.

"This is very humbling for us," said Billy Richmond with the Lexington Police Department. "This is, as sad as it is, some of the greatest satisfaction I personally think that I get being a police officer."

Ten of Ellis' former colleagues and friends made the trip to DC just for officer Ellis.

Bardstown Police Chief Rick McCubbin says seeing officer Ellis' name etched in stone is an honor – but it's heartbreaking. "Now that one of my own officers is on the wall and our officers are here, it gives it a whole new meaning."

McCubbin has been taking part in National Police Week in Washington for 25 years.

"I know many years ago when I first came, I told myself when I was a young rookie cop in Louisville, I said I will never will miss that because it just shows solidarity and all these men and women – over 20,000 are on this wall," McCubbin said.

While Ellis' family and friends will soon return home to Kentucky, they'll leave knowing there will always be a place to honor and remember him.

"This is the saddest fun you'll ever have, if that makes any sense," McCubbin said.

This annual National Peace Officers Memorial service has been held every year for 33 years on May 15th. The motto is never let them walk alone.

It's said their goal each year is to not have any names to read.

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Joe Biden On Campus Sexual Assault: Step Up. It's Time

[TIME](#), May 16, 2014

Vice President Joe **Biden** has voiced his opinion about the sexual assault problem on college campuses across the country, telling [TIME](#) that the White House wants to pressure university presidents to figure out a better way to handle claims of rape

Joe **Biden** is the Vice President of the United States

I believe that the vast majority of college presidents are right minded and like stockholders putting pressure on CEOs, the White House wants to put pressure on them to change. You don't want to be a school that mishandles rape. Guess what? Step up. It's time. Its absolutely time because the moral disapprobation of society is the most powerful tool for effecting change in the cultural norms that doggedly hang on.

House Silent On Highway Funding

By Keith Laing

[The Hill](#), May 15, 2014

The House is staying quiet in the debate over a new transportation funding bill despite a flurry of action by senators and the Obama administration.

Senate leaders this week unveiled a six-year, \$265 billion road and transit funding package bill that will be marked up in committee on Thursday morning.

Meanwhile, the administration is pressing for action after releasing its own plan for a four-year, \$302 billion transportation measure. President Obama and Vice President **Biden** both delivered speeches Wednesday to tout the proposal.

"If they don't act by the end of the summer, federal funding for transportation projects will run out," Obama said in front of the Tappan Zee Bridge in New York.

"There will be no money. The cupboard will be bare. And all told, nearly 700,000 jobs would be at risk over the next year — that's like the population of Tampa and St. Louis combined."

The House has stayed out of the fray, focusing instead on a recent agreement it reached with the Senate on a smaller \$8.2 billion bill to boost U.S. port and waterways.

Transportation advocates say it's time for House Republicans to get engaged in the debate.

"We're now into mid-May, and if the CBO is correct, we're facing an insolvency," AFL-CIO Transportation Trades Department President Ed Wytkind told The Hill. "There isn't a big vision out of the House and we need one."

Wytkind was referencing a recent projection from the Congressional Budget Office that the trust fund that is used to pay for road and transit will run out of money by the end of this summer.

The labor leader said the House's inactivity is dampening an otherwise positive week for the funding push.

"The administration is clearly all in, not only on having a bill, but they're using the powerful voices of the president, the vice-president and the [Transportation] secretary to go around the country taking the case to voters," Wytkind said.

Wytkind noted there are big differences between Obama's transportation proposal and the Senate's, including the fact that the president is calling for lawmakers to spend approximately \$25 billion per year more on road and transit projects than the upper chamber is suggesting.

But Wytkind said he was glad the Senate was staking out a position.

"The Senate is finally doing a bill, but it doesn't reflect the administration's priorities because the administration's bill is a significant expansion," he said. "The Senate bill is just adjusted for inflation. It's basically a flat line bill. If combine those two facts, I think it's time for the House to get moving and hopefully they can come up with something big."

The key figure in the House is Rep. Bill Shuster (R-Pa.), the chairman of the Transportation Committee. Shuster is facing his primary on Thursday, and is working to fend off a challenge from businessman Art Halvorson, who has attacked his past work on pricey transportation bills.

Shuster is expected to survive the primary, but transportation advocates are worried that too much time has been lost to pass a large bill before the projected bankruptcy date for the Highway Trust Fund.

"Certainly, I would like to see the House come up with something because my expectation is that whenever Shuster does come up with something, he's going to have a very different perspective [than Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Chairman Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.)]," said Joshua Schank, who is president of the independent Eno Center for Transportation in Washington.

Schank said he had “no doubt” that Shuster wants to pass a significant transportation bill during his tenure as House Transportation Committee Chairman. Shuster’s father once held the same position in Congress.

But Schank said Shuster is unlikely to go along with anything similar to Boxer’s plan.

“It’s my impression that he had the intention of making an imprint when he took the [Transportation Committee] chairmanship,” Schank said. “I don’t think his goal is just ‘let’s pass another six years of MAP-21, which basically what Boxer is proposing.’”

Shuster’s office declined to comment on the highway bill, pointing instead to the upcoming vote on final passage of the port and waterways measure.

Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) has said that the lower chamber is waiting to identify a funding mechanism to help pay for transportation projects before it releases a draft of its bill.

The traditional source for transportation funding has been the federal gas tax, which is now set at 18.4 cents-per-gallon. The gas tax has not been increased since 1993, however, and infrastructure expenses are now outpacing receipts by about \$16 billion per year.

The gas tax brings in approximately \$34 billion per year, but the current transportation bill includes more than \$50 billion in road and transit spending. Transportation advocates have said the current funding level is the bare minimum that can be spent to maintain the nation’s infrastructure.

The CBO has projected that lawmakers will have to find \$100 billion in revenue, in addition to the gas tax funding, to approve a new six-year transportation bill this year.

Transportation advocates have pushed for a bill that lasts for at least six years because lawmakers approved only a two-year measure in 2012 that is expiring in the fall.

Senators this week said their \$265 billion transportation bill would last six years, but have not yet decided how to pay for it.

Real Reason For Biden Visit: Editorial Cartoon

[Cleveland Plain Dealer](#), May 16, 2014

CLEVELAND, Ohio – Vice President Joe **Biden** made a rapid stop in Cleveland Wednesday to make a pitch for expanded federal spending on transportation infrastructure.

RTA’s Little Italy-University Circle Red Line station is one of several Ohio projects that have been funded with grants from the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery program. TIGER is part of the temporary 2009 economic stimulus package.

The Obama administration is on a road trip, highlighting projects like the Little Italy station, because Republican house members in Congress want to reduce the TIGER program funding and restrict spending to roads, bridges and highways. The Obama administration and Democrats in Congress want to keep the program all inclusive with rail, expand it, and make it permanent by merging TIGER with the Transportation Reauthorization Act.

This week in Clevelantis, **Biden** would likely have no problem finding bipartisan support if he was seeking expanded federal funding for storm sewer infrastructure and the construction of Arks.

Biden Urges Infrastructure Spending During Trip To Cleveland

[Twinsburg Bulletin](#), May 15, 2014

Cleveland – President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe **Biden** are traveling the country saying the nation needs to invest billions of federal dollars in highways and bridges, but some Ohio city officials are left to wonder: Where’s the money to fix our streets?

Making the pitch May 14 at a rail car repair shop in Cleveland, **Biden** said such investment is necessary for the U.S. to remain a pre-eminent economic force.

“Those in Congress who lack vision say we can’t afford to make these investments,” he said. “How can we not afford to make these investments?”

Biden was in Cleveland to highlight federal investment in a \$17.5 million new light rail station that will open in 2015. The president was in New York City, where the federal government has provided a \$1.6 billion loan to rebuild the Tappan Zee Bridge. Their message is that more money needs to be spent on infrastructure.

City officials in Ohio wish that a small share of those billions would trickle down to them for maintenance. Some Ohio cities are operating on the thinnest of margins as costs rise, tax receipts fall and state funding is reduced. Federal and state governments pay the lion’s share of big road and interstate projects, but routine maintenance of surface streets is typically left to cities to pay.

Police and firefighters must continue to be paid, so budget items like street resurfacing are the first to be trimmed, said Paul Barnett, public works manager for the city of Akron.

Akron will spend about \$2 million on street resurfacing this year but needs to spend at least \$8 million to keep pace, Barnett said. The city will resurface only 11 of its 2,400 lane miles this year.

“It’s OK if you plan on resurfacing your streets once every 30 years,” he said.

Cleveland will spend \$4.4 million. Toledo has upped its resurfacing budget to \$1 million compared with \$600,000 in 2013.

Toledo bought a machine so workers could replace entire stretches of pothole-pocked roadway, said Dave Welch, Toledo’s commissioner of streets, bridges and harbor. “There are roads that are pothole patch after pothole patch,” Welch said

The inability to properly maintain streets is a problem in smaller cities as well. In Euclid, Mayor Bill Cervenik said the federal government needs to step in.

“I certainly believe the federal government has to take a look at communities like ours and understand the problems we’re having and put together policies that help those communities that are built and aging and fix them,” Cervenik said.

Did Biden Post A Campaign Video To WhiteHouse.gov?

[WISN-AM Milwaukee](#), May 16, 2014

Quick, someone alert John Chisholm so he can convene a John Doe Investigation into this obvious use of government resources for campaign activity!

If You’re Reading This, You Did Not Buy Joe Biden’s Book

By Jim Treacher

[Daily Caller](#), May 16, 2014

It may seem baffling that a sitting Vice President of the United States can’t sell any books, until you consider that Joe **Biden** is a complete buffoon and everybody knows it. Why the hell would they want to buy a book with his name on it, unless it comes from The Onion?

Also, his boss has really screwed everything up, and that reflects badly on **Biden**. It’s going to reflect badly on any Democrat who runs in 2016. You’ll be able to measure this by the number of desperate MSM puff pieces about how great they are.

Their panic is only beginning to spiral. After November, their behavior will make the last 5 years look like the most uplifting episodes of The West Wing. They are on the brink of insanity, and I can’t wait to watch them plunge into the abyss as Election 2016 looms.

America is tired of you, Democrats. Enjoy this time of relative peace and quiet while you can. As ye sow, so shall ye reap. And you've done a hell of a lot of sowin'.

From P. Diddy To Biden To Tiger Woods' Ex, Celebrities Open Up To College Grads

By Eun Kyung Kim

[Today Show Online](#), May 16, 2014

Sean "Puff Daddy" Combs received an honorary doctorate in humanities from Howard University, where he delivered the May 10 commencement speech.

Ah, college graduation season: That time of year when famous celebrities and politicians don caps and gowns to dispense pearls of wisdom to thousands of college graduates across the country.

This year's commencement season has mainly drawn attention for a string of high-profile speakers who backed out of ceremonies under a cloud of controversy. Among the notable cancellations: Christine Lagarde, managing director of the International Monetary Fund, and former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, both of whom withdrew in the wake of student protests.

Those headlines have partially deflected attention away from dozens of other speakers whose words have already inspired newly minted grads — and the dozens more who will do so over the next several weeks. Here are some highlights:

Sean 'Puff Daddy' Combs

Howard University gave an honorary doctorate to its former student, Sean "Puff Daddy/Puffy/P. Diddy" Combs, who also was the school's commencement speaker.

Combs left college before getting his degree, a decision he said he questioned many times at board room meetings he attended early in his music career.

"If I didn't leave school early, I would have been more prepared," he told Howard's Class of 2014 on May 10.

Combs described a dark period in his life when, as many of his friends graduated from Howard, he got fired from a job just weeks away from becoming a father.

"One day, you're going to be sitting in the dark like I was, thinking, 'What am I going to do?' In that moment, I want you to remember the power in you," he told the crowd.

"Nobody is going to take you to the front of the line — you need to push to the front of the line," he said.

Elin Nordegren

Real-life experience helped Elin Nordegren earn the "outstanding graduating senior" award bestowed upon her by Rollins College, where she graduated with a psychology degree and a 3.96 grade point average.

Handout / Getty Images

Elin Nordegren, the ex-wife of Tiger Woods, poses after receiving the Outstanding Graduating Senior Award for the Class of 2014 during her May 10 graduation from Rollins College.

In a rare public appearance, the ex-wife of Tiger Woods teed off about her former husband during a commencement address without ever mentioning the golf legend's name. Instead, she joked about how far she has come since the fall of 2005, when she first enrolled in the Winter Park, Fla., school.

"I was 25 years old. I had just recently moved to America. I was married without children," Nordegren told her fellow graduates. "Today, nine years later, I'm a proud American, and I have two beautiful children — but I'm no longer married."

Nordegren divorced Woods after learning in 2009 about his series of adulterous affairs. She reportedly received more than \$100 million in the settlement and, years later, she can laugh about that tumultuous time.

"It was right after I had taken communication and the media. I was unexpectedly thrust into the media limelight," she said.

"And I probably should have taken more notes in that class."

Rick Mastracchio

The commencement speech given by NASA spaceman Rick Mastracchio to University of Connecticut graduates was far out. Literally.

The astronaut spoke to the university's School of Engineering grads while floating, at times upside down, inside the International Space Station, 360 miles above Earth.

"I was trying to figure out how to make this speech different than all the other commencement addresses that are given each year," Mastracchio said. "And then I realized, I'm in a weightless environment. So maybe I should give the speech in a different orientation."

Mastracchio said he probably has "the best job on, and off, the planet." But he also spoke about the perseverance he needed to land that job: He sent in applications for nine years before finally getting accepted into the nation's elite space program.

"I wasn't just sending in an application and crossing my fingers. I was working on things to improve my chances," said Mastracchio, whose May 10 speech came just days before he returned to Earth, ending his six-month mission aboard the Space Station.

At night, he took classes to earn a second master's degree. On weekends, he worked toward getting his pilot's license.

"You become an astronaut the same way you accomplish any goal — through hard work and perseverance," he told the graduates. "Everyone has goals, dreams and wishes, but not everybody wants to do the daily work it takes to reach their goals."

U.S. astronaut Rick Mastracchio delivered a speech to University of Connecticut engineering graduates.

Upcoming celebrity speeches

The weeks ahead will include commencement addresses by former U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords and her husband, Mark Kelly, to graduates of Bard College on May 25, and Oprah Winfrey to Harvard University grads on May 30. Bill and Melinda Gates will speak at Stanford's commencement ceremony on June 15.

Coming up this weekend on May 17, fashion designer Tory Burch is scheduled to address Babson College, while Bill Nye the Science Guy is slated to speak to graduates of University of Massachusetts-Lowell.

President Barack Obama also will deliver a commencement address, speaking to Morehouse College's class of 2014 on Saturday. Just a week earlier, both the vice president and first lady gave graduation speeches of their own.

Joe **Biden** spoke at the University of South Carolina, warning students, "do not listen to the cynics" who doubt their potential.

First lady Michelle Obama, meanwhile, urged graduates of Dillard University to stay hungry for education, even after graduation, because it will inspire the "next generation of geniuses."

“Imagine the impact you will make,” she said. “You have no excuses to stand on the sidelines. Education is still the key to real and lasting freedom. It’s up to us to cultivate that hunger for education in those coming after us.”

Russia Pours Scorn On News Of Hunter Biden’s New Job

[TIME](#), May 16, 2014

The news that Vice President Joe **Biden**’s son Hunter had taken a job with the Ukrainian gas company Burisma has been met in Russia with malicious glee. “Ahaha,” tweeted Member of Parliament Alexander Sidyakin, reacting to the White House statement that there was no conflict of interest after the news of Hunter **Biden**’s new role was made public on Tuesday. “Joe **Biden** is a good dad – took the trouble of going across the ocean to secure a job for his son,” the pro-Kremlin website politrussia.ru commented in its Twitter feed, referring to Vice President’s recent trip to Ukraine.

Rossiya TV channel’s commentator Andrey Arkhipov said the appointment was “in line with Washington’s plan to gain control over global energy resources.” Dubbing Joe **Biden** “the curator of the military coup in Ukraine” – a reference to the ousting of pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovich in February following months of public protests – Arkhipov ridiculed the idea that no U.S. lobbying was involved in the appointment.

Top TV and radio anchor Vladimir Solovyov speculated about the fact that Burisma owned licenses for shale gas deposits in the areas of eastern Ukraine, where armed conflict between government forces and separatist insurgents is now flaring. “Let me remind you what the U.S. keeps telling Europe: Reject Russian gas. We’ll provide as much gas as you need. We have shale gas technology,” he said, without developing his conspiracy theory any further. Ukraine’s and Europe’s dependence on Russian gas supplies is a major factor in the Ukrainian geopolitical equation.

Russian media has been picturing Joe **Biden** as the Ukrainian government’s puppeteer ever since last month’s visit, which was aimed at demonstrating American support for the interim Ukrainian government. While in Kiev, **Biden** was filmed taking the chairperson’s seat at a meeting with Ukrainian ministers. That footage featured prominently in Russian TV bulletins as an illustration of Ukraine allegedly turning into a U.S. colony.

The incident prompted a vitriolic comment by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, who said that “Joe **Biden** was conducting a meeting with the Ukrainian leadership essentially in the capacity of the head of state, presiding over the table, with Ukrainian officials on his side.”

Jill Biden To Speak At Villanova Commencement

[Philadelphia Inquirer](#), May 16, 2014

VILLANOVA Jill **Biden**, a lifelong educator and the wife of Vice President **Biden**, is scheduled to be the commencement speaker at Villanova University’s graduation on Friday.

Jill **Biden**, who earned a master’s of arts in English from Villanova in 1991 before receiving a doctorate in education from the University of Delaware, will be awarded an honorary doctor of humanities degree.

Biden, who grew up in Willow Grove, started her education career teaching English and reading in high schools for 13 years. Since 2009, she has been a professor of English at Northern Virginia Community College.

As second lady, **Biden** has worked to emphasize the critical role of community colleges in creating America’s workforce. She recently traveled across the country as part of the “Community College to

Career” tour to highlight industry partnerships between community colleges and employers. In 2010, she hosted the first White House Summit on Community Colleges with President Obama.

She is also active in supporting military families, and started the **Biden** Breast Health Initiative in Delaware, which over the last 21 years has educated more than 10,000 high school girls about the importance of early detection of breast cancer.

– Kathy Boccella

CUSD 201 Teacher Turns White House Visit Into New Lesson Plan

[Downers Grove \(IL\) Suburban Life](#), May 11, 2014

WESTMONT – Westmont Junior High School teacher Nancy Bartosz continues to use her travels as an educational tool.

A CUSD 201 employee of 20 years, Bartosz, 43, of Chicago, spent a year traveling around the world in 2012 before resuming her teaching career with the district and incorporating her stories in lesson plans.

“I think it’s important to use real world experiences when teaching students,” she said. “My mission is to engage the community and build global connections for our youth.”

On May 7, Bartosz, now an eighth grade literacy teacher at the junior high, was one of 22 educators who spent the day at the White House participating in a conference for National Teacher’s Appreciation Week.

The week before the event, Bartosz filled out an application after seeing a Facebook post by the U.S. Department of Education. Within days, she was notified of her acceptance and boarded a plane to Washington D.C. on May 6.

“It was a straightforward application process, but I think my responses stood out because of my travels, my digital footprint and the different roles that I have taken on at the junior high and high school,” she said.

During the White House Social event, guests met national leaders and policy makers, including Second Lady Jill **Biden** and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, for roundtable discussions on educational excellence and student preparedness.

Attendees were required to live Tweet the events using the “WHSocial” hashtag and capture their experiences on other social media sites such as Instagram, Pinterest and Facebook.

Bartosz shared her trip the Twitter handle, @Westmont8th, and her timeline was projected in the junior high commons area for all to see. She also corresponded with multiple students, who intermittently tweeted at her throughout the day.

After watching President Barack Obama board the Marine One helicopter, the group proceeded to a conference room in the Eisenhower executive office building, where Jill **Biden** led a discussion about the Joining Forces Initiative and the children’s book that she authored, “Don’t Forget, God Bless Our Troops.”

“I really enjoyed hearing the experiences of Dr. **Biden** – I think all the teachers did,” Bartosz said. “She is a lifelong educator and still teaches at the community college. She has a very warm, lovely personality and was very easy to relate to.”

The speakers also detailed various professional learning opportunities that are readily available for teachers. Afterwards, Bartosz said she plans to look up upcoming summer education camp.

“Ed camps provide a place where teachers can learn how to make schools less administration centered and more teacher centered,” she said. I also learned about Maker Affairs, which focus on technology, science math and inventing. It would be nice to bring those skills back to the community.”

Bartosz's students will also benefit from her trip to the white house, as she plans to incorporate everything she learned into various eighth grade lesson plans.

"For me, the most powerful message that I can take back to my students relates to their digital footprint," she said. "During the conference, we talked about how to represent yourself online. Not only is it important to be aware of the negative uses of social media, but also the positive ways kids can cultivate a digital footprint.

"I was also blown away by the amount of young professionals and students that work at the White House. They are no different than students that might graduate from this district. Since returning I have told my classes that if there is something you want, apply for it, because you never know what might happen."

Get to know Nancy Bartosz

What: Eighth grade literacy teacher at Westmont Junior High School

Age: 43

Residence: Chicago

Learn more about White House initiatives and socials at www.whitehouse.gov/blog

NEW YORK TIMES AND WASHINGTON POST OP-EDS

Searching For Fairness On The Internet

By Editorial Board, New York Times Editorial Board

[New York Times](#), May 16, 2014

After weeks of being criticized for a proposal that would have divided the Internet into fast and slow lanes, the Federal Communications Commission put forward a new plan on Thursday. While more balanced than its earlier approach, the commission still seems to be leaning toward creating a two-tiered system that could discriminate against smaller companies and restrict consumer choice.

The F.C.C. has been struggling for years to come up with rules to prevent phone and cable companies from blocking or interfering with Internet content. Last month, the chairman of the agency, Tom Wheeler, appeared to throw in the towel when he proposed regulations that would have allowed telecommunications companies to strike deals with firms like Netflix and Amazon for faster delivery of their videos and other data to consumers.

Then, on Thursday, the commission voted 3 to 2 along party lines to consider two options. Under the first option, the F.C.C. would require cable and phone companies to provide their broadband subscribers a basic level of unfettered Internet service. But as long as that condition is met, telecom companies would also be able to charge businesses like Netflix fees to deliver their movies faster to consumers than others.

Under the second option, the commission would reclassify broadband as a telecommunications service, akin to a public utility. That would allow for more stringent regulation that could prevent companies like Verizon and Comcast from engaging in unreasonable and unjust discrimination. Many consumer advocates like Public Knowledge and legal scholars like Tim Wu of Columbia Law School have recommended this option all along.

Mr. Wheeler and the commission's two other Democratic members say they will listen to public comments over the next four months before making up their minds about which of the two options they will pick. (The agency's two Republican members said they voted against the proposal because they do not think the F.C.C. should adopt any such rules.)

There are serious problems with the first option. It would give phone and cable companies a financial incentive to scrimp on basic high-speed Internet service in order to encourage companies like Apple or Google, which owns YouTube, to pay fees for premium delivery. Mr. Wheeler said on Thursday that he doesn't want the Internet "divided into 'haves' and 'have-nots,'" but that's exactly what would happen if the commission creates a regulatory distinction between basic and premium offerings.

The commission would be on much more solid ground if it decided to classify broadband Internet service as a utility. Mr. Wheeler has not been very enthusiastic about this option, which has many opponents among lawmakers in Washington, particularly Republicans who usually side with deep-pocketed phone and cable companies on controversial regulatory matters. But the chairman and the other two Democrats on the commission have to consider this option seriously if they want to make sure Americans can access lawful content on the Internet without restriction.

Mr. Wheeler has said he wants to adopt final rules by the end of the year. But the F.C.C. should take more time if it needs to, as one Democratic commissioner, Jessica Rosenworcel, has suggested. These rules are too important to rush through.

A Once-A-Day Pill To Prevent AIDS

[New York Times](#), May 16, 2014

Federal health officials are urging hundreds of thousands of healthy people at high risk of contracting AIDS to take a pill every day to protect themselves from the virus that causes it. The recommendation could help reduce the stubbornly high number of infections, which has held steady at 50,000 new infections a year in the United States. But the pill carries risks that must be addressed as well.

The drug, made by Gilead Sciences and known as Truvada, contains two antiviral drugs that have been used for a decade in combination with other drugs to treat people already infected with H.I.V., the virus that causes AIDS. Two years ago the Food and Drug Administration approved it for a radically different purpose — to prevent disease in people who have not yet been infected. When taken every day, the pill can be extremely effective; it protected 99 percent of the gay men in one study.

In guidelines issued Wednesday by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the pill is recommended for high-risk groups like gay men who have sex with multiple partners, heterosexuals who have sex with high-risk partners such as intravenous drug users, people in sexual relationships with someone known to be infected, prostitutes and anyone who shares needles. The pill is supposed to be used along with condoms and other safe sex practices to provide added protection, but many men could shun condoms knowing that this option is available.

The dangers of that behavioral change are worrisome. Unprotected sex could lead to higher rates of syphilis, gonorrhea and other sexually transmitted diseases, as well as unwanted pregnancies. If people fail to take their pill every day, as many will, they will increase the risk of developing and spreading a resistant strain of the virus.

Truvada is also expensive — about \$13,000 a year — and usage could soar from fewer than 10,000 prescriptions a year to perhaps 500,000 a year. Most insurers and state Medicaid programs already cover the drug so patients should be able to afford it, but the cumulative cost could cause financial strains for public and private programs.

Even so, the potential benefits of preventing infections outweigh the risks, especially if steps are taken to minimize the risks. Before starting on Truvada, patients should have an H.I.V. test to make sure they are not already infected, in which case they should be taking three drugs. They should be retested

every three months to determine whether they have become infected or have developed side effects or sexually transmitted diseases.

The new approach, if carried out with care, could be a big step forward in curbing the toll from AIDS.

Unsolved Atrocities In Bangladesh

[New York Times](#), May 16, 2014

It seems that the Bangladesh International Crimes Tribunal can find only one way to respond to criticism of proceedings that clearly fall short of international standards: charge critics with contempt of court.

The court sought contempt charges against Human Rights Watch last year after the group criticized its proceedings. Last month, the court charged David Bergman, a Bangladesh-based British journalist married to a prominent Bangladeshi human rights lawyer, Sara Hossain, with contempt for questioning some proceedings of the court in his blog.

The tribunal is only harming its own credibility with such charges. Set up to provide a long overdue reckoning of the horrific crimes committed during the country's struggle for independence from Pakistan in 1971, the court has given the appearance of acting more as an instrument of partisan revenge than as a forum for impartial justice. Any criticism of it is reflexively taken as criticism of the governing Awami League and, by absurd extension, of the emergence of Bangladesh itself as an independent nation.

The court has been particularly sensitive about the number of Bangladeshis killed in that struggle. The official number in Bangladesh is three million, but while scholars agree that far too many were murdered in 1971, some believe the number is lower. It is a measure of the court's undue sensitivity that one of the contempt charges leveled against Mr. Bergman is that he merely reported this dispute.

The court also has tried people in absentia, without the benefit of a credible defense, and then sentenced them to death. It is an absurd irony that another of the contempt charges leveled against Mr. Bergman is for the regret he expressed that the trial, conviction and death sentence against Chowdhury Mueen Uddin, a British resident, took place in absentia. The court had based its charges against Mr. Uddin largely on information revealed in Mr. Bergman's 1995 documentary film, "War Crimes File."

Embarrassed by reports about Mr. Bergman's plight, the International Crimes Tribunal has instituted a gag order against the press. Muzzling the press will only further erode the reputation of the court, whose contempt for international standards of justice appears to know no bounds.

Force-Feedings At Guantánamo

[New York Times](#), May 16, 2014

Nothing comes to light easily at the Guantánamo Bay military prison in Cuba where 154 detainees are held on suspicion of terrorist activities. Some have been incarcerated for more than a decade, in a legal limbo that remains a grave embarrassment to American justice.

This week, one of the lawsuits by a Guantánamo detainee produced news that the military has apparently been videotaping its force-feedings of prisoners who have been attempting a hunger strike to protest their confinement and treatment. Pentagon officials admitted last year that the cause of the hunger strike was prisoners' despairing that they would ever be released.

The disclosure is important because a federal appeals court in the District of Columbia decided in February that while it would not initially block the force-feedings (in which prisoners are restrained and fed by a tube through the nose), it would retain jurisdiction and hear prisoners' complaints of inhumane treatment as part of a habeas corpus lawsuit. This could prove to be one of the more promising avenues in the struggle to expose the woeful situation at Guantánamo to greater public attention.

Detainees' lawyers have asked the court to issue an emergency order to prevent the government from destroying any existing video recordings of the force-feedings, after learning of their existence on May 13. Seven years ago at the height of the controversy over waterboarding, the Central Intelligence Agency was found to have destroyed videotapes of interrogation sessions using that torture technique.

President Obama has sought to shut down Guantánamo, but Congress has barred the transfer of detainees to mainland prisons. Administration lawyers insisted this week that there would be "robust protection" of national security if the detainees were transferred, but Congress remains adamant in refusing to close the facility.

The court should order the military to preserve the tapes and to hand them over to the prisoners' lawyers. The hunger strike and force-feedings are a sorry chapter in the long-running travesty of justice that festers in Guantánamo.

The Man In A Red Bandanna

[New York Times](#), May 16, 2014

Among the many moving moments at the dedication of the National September 11 Memorial Museum in Lower Manhattan on Thursday was a story President Obama told about the man in a red bandanna. Bewildered and frightened, the people huddled in the smoke and darkness that day on the 78th floor of the World Trade Center's south tower heard a voice, clear and calm, leading them to the stairs and to safety. Their guide was a young man holding a red handkerchief over his face.

Having helped them, he then went back up the stairs to help others.

"They didn't know his name. They didn't know where he came from. But they knew their lives had been saved by the man in the red bandanna," the president said.

When Alison Crowther heard this story a few months after the towers collapsed, she knew their hero was her son Welles Crowther, 24. The young man, who had kept a red handkerchief with him since he was a boy, was one of almost 3,000 people who did not survive the attacks. One of his bandannas is now on display at the museum, a reminder, as the president said, of "the true spirit of 9/11 — love, compassion, sacrifice."

Mr. Obama and other dignitaries wisely avoided the temptation to use the occasion to make political points or engage in overblown rhetoric, focusing instead on the stories of heroism and survival that are told throughout the cavernous underground museum. The speakers also turned to smaller objects to make larger points about bravery — Todd Beamer's watch, permanently seared at the number 11, reminding us how he and fellow passengers on United Airlines Flight 93 overpowered the hijackers, dying as their jet crashed in Pennsylvania instead of allowing the attackers to reach the White House.

Forgotten for the day were years of skirmishing among museum leaders, politicians and family members. And saved for later were the pleas from museum officials about the need for more federal money from the president and his colleagues in Washington to support this national memorial. Instead, it was a day for remembering extraordinary people like Welles Crowther.

The Commencement Bigots

By Timothy Egan

[New York Times](#), May 16, 2014

It's commencement season, cellphones off please, no texts or tweets. Even with a hangover from debt, alcohol or regret, grads across the land may be lucky enough to hear something on the Big Day that actually stays with them.

Among the best of the past were the words of the novelist David Foster Wallace, talking to the newly minted at Kenyon College in 2005. If you can't learn to "construct meaning from experience," he said, "you will be totally hosed."

There was Steve Jobs, college dropout, at Stanford in the same year, on mortality: "Remembering that I'll be dead soon is the most important tool I've ever encountered to help me make the big choices in life." And don't forget the lasting guidance from Stephen Colbert at Knox College in 2006: "The best career advice I can give you is to get your own TV show. It pays well, the hours are good, and you are famous. And eventually, some very nice people will give you a doctorate in fine arts for doing jack squat."

This year, there's the remarkable life story of the African-American scholar who grew up in the segregated South and rose to become secretary of state. Didn't hear that one? Nobody did. Condoleezza Rice was scheduled to give the 248th anniversary commencement address at Rutgers University this coming Sunday. She canceled after a small knot of protesters pressured the university. It's no contest who showed more class.

Near as I can tell, the forces of intolerance objected to her role in the Iraq war. O.K. And by shutting her down, the point is ... what? That extremism, whether in the climate-denial echo chamber of Republican Party elites or in the fragile zone of college faculty lounges, is the worst enemy of free speech.

Thanks to the bigots, Smith College graduates will be deprived of the thoughts of Christine Lagarde, chief of the International Monetary Fund. She withdrew this week, under pressure from people who object to the I.M.F.'s role in the "strengthening of imperialist and patriarchal systems." So, one of the world's most powerful women will not share insights with one of the nation's most prominent women's colleges because of a concern about patriarchy. Evil men — that'll show 'em.

This was followed by the swift departure of Robert J. Birgeneau, a former chancellor of the University of California, Berkeley, as a speaker at Haverford College. Yes, you heard that right: The man from Berkeley is not suitable for the sensitive souls of Haverford.

For guidance, these censors could have consulted the Rutgers student mission statement. "We embrace difference by cultivating inclusiveness and respect of both people and points of view." Diversity of perspective? Thy name should be academia. But of late, too many schools are opting for well-vetted bores. Pursue your dream, live your own life, don't forget to floss or use sunscreen, and if you're forced to share a hall with people you don't like, shout them down and kick them out the door.

The foreign policy that Rice guided for George W. Bush — two wars on the credit card, making torture a word associated with the United States — was clearly a debacle. Contemporary assessments were not kind, and history will be brutal.

But if every speaker has to pass a test for benign mediocrity and politically correct sensitivity, commencement stages will be home to nothing but milquetoasts. You want torture? Try listening to the Stanford speech of 2009, when Justice Anthony M. Kennedy gave an interminable address on the intricacies of international law, under a broiling sun, with almost no mention of the graduates.

Give me a brisk, strong, witty defense of something I disagree with over a tired replay of platitudes. It matters little if the speaker is a convict or a seminarian, a statesman or a comedian.

This season, the left is better than the right at pressure tactics designed to kill opposing views. But who wants to claim that title?

Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr. recently canceled an address at the graduation ceremony of the Oklahoma City police academy after he was harassed by gun nuts and Republican elected officials — often a redundancy, I realize. Organizers called for officers in attendance to "place Holder in handcuffs."

Good lesson for the grads — arrest the nation's highest law enforcement officer because you don't share his politics. One Republican, an Oklahoma state senator, Paul Wesselhoft, cheered the strong-arm tactics. "This is a significant lesson in political activism," he said. No, it's a primer in how to be a bully.

In that sense, the lefty thought police at Smith, Haverford and Rutgers share one thing with the knuckle-dragging hard right in Oklahoma: They're afraid of hearing something that might spoil a view of the world they've already figured out.

Points Of No Return

By Paul Krugman

[New York Times](#), May 16, 2014

Recently two research teams, working independently and using different methods, reached an alarming conclusion: The West Antarctic ice sheet is doomed. The sheet's slide into the ocean, and the resulting sharp rise in sea levels, will probably happen slowly. But it's irreversible. Even if we took drastic action to limit global warming right now, this particular process of environmental change has reached a point of no return.

Meanwhile, Senator Marco Rubio of Florida — much of whose state is now fated to sink beneath the waves — weighed in on climate change. Some readers may recall that in 2012 Mr. Rubio, asked how old he believed the earth to be, replied "I'm not a scientist, man." This time, however, he confidently declared the overwhelming scientific consensus on climate change false, although in a later interview he was unable to cite any sources for his skepticism.

So why would the senator make such a statement? The answer is that like that ice sheet, his party's intellectual evolution (or maybe more accurately, its devolution) has reached a point of no return, in which allegiance to false doctrines has become a crucial badge of identity.

I've been thinking a lot lately about the power of doctrines — how support for a false dogma can become politically mandatory, and how overwhelming contrary evidence only makes such dogmas stronger and more extreme. For the most part, I've been focusing on economic issues, but the same story applies with even greater force to climate.

To see how it works, consider a topic I know well: the recent history of inflation scares.

More than five years have passed since many conservatives started warning that the Federal Reserve, by taking action to contain the financial crisis and boost the economy, was setting the stage for runaway inflation. And, to be fair, that wasn't a crazy position to take in 2009; I could have told you it was wrong (and, in fact, I did), but you could see where it was coming from.

Over time, however, as the promised inflation kept failing to arrive, there should have come a point when the inflationistas conceded their error and moved on.

In fact, however, few did. Instead, they mostly doubled down on their predictions of doom, and some moved on to conspiracy theorizing, claiming that high inflation was already happening, but was being concealed by government officials.

Why the bad behavior? Nobody likes admitting to mistakes, and all of us — even those of us who try not to — sometimes engage in motivated reasoning, selectively citing facts to support our preconceptions.

But hard as it is to admit one's own errors, it's much harder to admit that your entire political movement got it badly wrong. Inflation phobia has always been closely bound up with right-wing politics; to admit that this phobia was misguided would have meant conceding that one whole side of the political divide was fundamentally off base about how the economy works. So most of the inflationistas have

responded to the failure of their prediction by becoming more, not less, extreme in their dogma, which will make it even harder for them ever to admit that they, and the political movement they serve, have been wrong all along.

The same kind of thing is clearly happening on the issue of global warming. There are, obviously, some fundamental factors underlying G.O.P. climate skepticism: The influence of powerful vested interests (including, though by no means limited to, the Koch brothers), plus the party's hostility to any argument for government intervention. But there is clearly also some kind of cumulative process at work. As the evidence for a changing climate keeps accumulating, the Republican Party's commitment to denial just gets stronger.

Think of it this way: Once upon a time it was possible to take climate change seriously while remaining a Republican in good standing. Today, listening to climate scientists gets you excommunicated — hence Mr. Rubio's statement, which was effectively a partisan pledge of allegiance.

And truly crazy positions are becoming the norm. A decade ago, only the G.O.P.'s extremist fringe asserted that global warming was a hoax concocted by a vast global conspiracy of scientists (although even then that fringe included some powerful politicians). Today, such conspiracy theorizing is mainstream within the party, and rapidly becoming mandatory; witch hunts against scientists reporting evidence of warming have become standard operating procedure, and skepticism about climate science is turning into hostility toward science in general.

It's hard to see what could reverse this growing hostility to inconvenient science. As I said, the process of intellectual devolution seems to have reached a point of no return. And that scares me more than the news about that ice sheet.

Ireland's Troubled Peace

By Colum Mccann

[New York Times](#), May 16, 2014

FORTY years ago this Saturday, three no-warning bombs ripped through Dublin. Less than an hour later, another bomb shattered the rural quiet of the town of Monaghan. In all, 33 people were killed and more than 300 injured. In Dublin, sheets of newspaper were laid over the dismembered bodies to hide them from view. The headlines soaked up the blood: the news in advance.

There would be more bloody headlines; over the next 24 years, 3,600 people would lose their lives in what have euphemistically been called the Irish "Troubles."

The Troubles ended with the historic peace accords of 1998, which have held, more or less, since then. If the Irish peace process was once a toddler, it is now nearing the age where it must ready itself for university, or a job, or perhaps, most chillingly, the unemployment line.

And yet we can't quite get away from the past, and the reminder that however mature the peace, it is always at risk of faltering, or of falling apart. Justice can be parlayed into revenge.

Just two weeks ago the president of the Irish nationalist Sinn Fein party, Gerry Adams, was arrested and interrogated for four days about the kidnapping and murder of Jean McConville, a mother of 10 who disappeared over 40 years ago. Her body was found on a windswept beach 11 years ago, a bullet hole in the back of the skull.

On Belfast's nationalist Falls Road, a freshly painted mural of Mr. Adams that read "Peacemaker, Leader, Visionary" appeared on a wall, while across town Mervyn Gibson, the chaplain for the Protestant Orange Order said: "Sadly, it's not a memorial mural."

Irish nationalists saw the arrest as an exercise in public humiliation in the run-up to local and European elections. On the other hand, pro-British loyalists were incensed that while Mr. Adams was brought in for questioning, over the years the British government had written 200 letters to fugitives suspected of membership in the Irish Republican Army, saying that there would be no prosecutions.

Meanwhile the atmosphere between leaders inside the Northern Ireland power-sharing executive branch has turned distinctly sour, with the Unionist first minister, Peter Robinson, and the deputy first minister, Martin McGuinness of Sinn Féin, trading verbal jabs of “cowardice” and resignation threats over attacks by suspected paramilitary loyalists in Belfast. And there is a sense on both sides that the British government in particular has walked away, furtively, unwilling to look back.

The peace may be holding, but the process is faltering. Just five months ago, the political parties failed to agree on proposals put forward by Richard N. Haass, an American envoy to the peace process. The most notable obstacles were the matter of flags, parades and how to “contend” with the past, namely through a “historical investigations unit” to carry out inquiries into Troubles-related killings.

What Mr. Haass left behind was a country distinctly unsure of itself. Investment in Northern Ireland has soared in recent years. A sense of color and charm has seeped into the streets. Checkpoints have disappeared. Festivals abound. Sixteen years of peace have meant that a whole generation has grown up without the daily litany of violence.

At the same time, many Catholics and Protestants live in walled-off mini-citadels and their children go to separate schools. A rash of xenophobic attacks against Eastern Europeans have occurred in Belfast, with “Locals Only” scrawled on wooden panels placed over shattered windows.

And small eruptions of violence hit regularly; virtually every year the failure to agree on parade marching routes and the politics of flags serves up yet another reason for the Molotov cocktails to fly. It’s a small sky over Northern Ireland, but there’s a lot of smoke.

The people of Ireland and Britain still desperately want the peace to continue. It’s one of the few things that we have excelled at in recent years. It is a moral commodity. We have put a lot of energy into it. It makes us look good.

If it falters, it will be a disaster not only for us but for the rest of the world. Peace is not a local thing. That’s what makes it superior to war. War stays where war is. Peace belongs elsewhere, as well as at home. That’s part of its muscle. The presence of peace in Ireland is a lifeline, however tentative, to Syria, to Ukraine, to Colombia.

But the sense of exhaustion in Northern Ireland is a self-perpetuating time bomb. This is not just petty political squabbling. Peace — especially at the delicate age of 16 — can have an ego. It can turn off its calculating mind and fall into the dark pit of being satisfied with itself. Forging a continuing peace process means understanding that there are always going to be several viable truths. The peacemaker — as Senator George J. Mitchell, who negotiated the peace, learned in 1998 — must show the tenacity of a fanatic.

It is, of course, naïve to expect total reconciliation. Some grievances are so deep that the people who suffered them will never be satisfied. But the point is not satisfaction — the point is that the present is superior to the past, and it has to be cultivated as such.

Despite the fact that the Obama administration has not appointed an ambassador to Ireland for a year and a half (the longest period that America has not had a top diplomat in Dublin), the White House is still vital to preserving and re-energizing the peace.

Once upon a time, there were bullets in the back of the head. There were car bombs along South Leinster Street. There were young girls getting tarred and feathered in the flatlands of Belfast. That’s not

happening anymore. But just because it's not happening now, doesn't mean it will not happen again. To lose the process now would be an international crime that reaches backward and forward both.

Colum McCann is the author of the novel "TransAtlantic" and a co-founder of Narrative 4, a global story exchange project.

Stairway To Wisdom

By David Brooks

[New York Times](#), May 16, 2014

Let's say you wanted to understand a social problem in depth. Let's say you wanted to move from a dry, statistical understanding of a problem to a rich, humane one. How would you do it? What steps would you take on your climb toward understanding?

Well, obviously, first you'd start with the data. Let's say, for example, you were studying teenage pregnancy. You'd want to understand the basic facts and trends. You'd discover from a recent Brookings Institution report that annual teenage childbearing rates have declined by an astonishing 52 percent since 1991.

Next you'd want to get some grasp of the general causes for this phenomenon. At this stage, you would consult the academic research.

This research casts doubt on some possible explanations for the amazing decline. Teenage pregnancy rates are not falling because abortion is on the rise. As far as we can tell, abortion rates are falling, too. Better sexual education must have had some role, but that doesn't explain the trend either. Teen pregnancy is declining just as much in states like Texas without comprehensive sex ed as it is in states like New Jersey with it.

On the other hand, improved contraception is working. Pregnancy rates fall as people move away from condoms toward IUDs. Sexual attitudes are changing, too. Teenagers are having their first sexual experiences later than they used to and they are less sexually active than previous generations.

This academic research offers a look at general tendencies within groups. The research helps you to make informed generalizations about how categories of people are behaving. If you use it correctly, you can even make snappy generalizations about classes of people that are fun and useful up to a point.

But this work is insufficient for anyone seeking deep understanding. Unlike minnows, human beings don't exist just as members of groups. We all know people whose lives are breathtakingly unpredictable: a Mormon leader who came out of the closet and became a gay dad; an investment banker who became a nun; a child with a wandering anthropologist mom who became president.

We all slip into the general patterns of psychology and sociology sometimes, but we aren't captured by them. People live and get pregnant one by one, and each life and each pregnancy has its own unlikely story. To move the next rung up the ladder of understanding you have to dive into the tangle of individual lives. You have to enter the realm of fiction, biography and journalism. My academic colleagues sometimes disparage journalism, but, when done right, it offers a higher form of knowing than social science research.

By conducting sensitive interviews and by telling a specific story, the best journalism respects the infinite dignity of the individual, and the unique blend of thoughts and feelings that go into that real, breathing life.

A pregnancy, for example, isn't just a piece of data in a set. It came about after a unique blend of longings and experiences. Maybe a young woman just wanted to feel like an adult; maybe she had some desire for arduous love, maybe she was just absent-minded, or loved danger, or couldn't resist her

boyfriend, or saw no possible upside for her future anyway. In each case the ingredients will be different. Only careful case-by-case storytelling can uncover and respect the delirious iconoclasm of how life is actually lived.

But even this isn't the highest rung on the ladder of understanding. Statisticians, academics and journalists all adopt a dispassionate pose. Academics rely on formal methodology and jargon. Journalists observe from behind the wall of their notebooks.

The highest rung on the stairway to understanding is intimacy. Our master-teacher here is Augustine. As he aged, Augustine came to reject those who thought they could understand others from some detached objective stance.

He came to believe that it takes selfless love to truly know another person. Love is a form of knowing and being known. Affection motivates you to want to see everything about another. Empathy opens you up to absorb the good and the bad. Love impels you not just to observe, but to seek union — to think as another thinks and feel as another feels.

There is a tendency now, especially for those of us in the more affluent classes, to want to use education to make life more predictable, to seek control as the essential good, to emphasize data that masks the remorseless unpredictability of individual lives. But people engaged in direct contact with problems like teenage pregnancy are cured of those linear illusions. Those of us who work with data and for newspapers probably should be continually reminding ourselves to bow down before the knowledge of participation, to defer to the highest form of understanding, which is held by those who walk alongside others every day, who know the first names, who know the smells and fears.

Marco Rubio On The 'Settled Science' Of Abortion

By Juliet Lapidos

[New York Times](#), May 16, 2014

Sick of taking flak for his climate-change denial, Senator Marco Rubio tried to change the topic (a classic crisis-management move) by accusing his critics of hypocrisy (another classic).

It's hypocritical, Mr. Rubio told Sean Hannity on Wednesday, for "all these people" to "wag their finger" at him about "science and settled science" — because there's another area of settled science they don't like to discuss.

"Let me give you a bit of settled science that they'll never admit to. The science is settled, it's not even a consensus, it is a unanimity, that human life begins at conception. So I hope the next time someone wags their finger about science, they'll ask one of these leaders on the left: 'Do you agree with the consensus of scientists that say that human life begins at conception?' I'd like to see someone ask that question."

That's pretty cunning, in part because it's hard to craft a rebuttal that doesn't sound callous or lawyerly. E.g.: that's not the point or it depends on what the meaning of 'life' is. But Mr. Rubio probably knows that he's obfuscating what—for most people—is the real issue: Not life, full stop (single-celled organisms are alive) but personhood, which is more a philosophical than a scientific question.

Some abortion opponents believe fervently that a fertilized egg is a person, from a rights standpoint. Others obviously disagree. And in fact so-called "personhood" amendments, which define a fertilized egg as a person, have failed in even social-conservative strongholds. Historically the "quickening," when a pregnant woman first perceives fetal movements, was used as a marker for the legal beginning of life. Life "begins in contemplation of law as soon as an infant is able to stir in the mother's womb," wrote the British legal scholar William Blackstone in the 18th century.

Mr. Rubio also ignores the fraught — and, again, philosophical as opposed to scientific — question of whether, or at what point or under which circumstances the rights of the fetus trump those of the mother. Many Americans who otherwise oppose abortion believe it should be permissible in cases of rape or incest or to save the life of the mother. Presumably their views on when life begins aren't germane; they're weighing social and emotional considerations.

Mr. Rubio's comments also raise the uncomfortable question of whether he's prepared to be guided by science in the various tricky issues surrounding the national debate over abortion. As noted in this MSNBC piece, Mr. Rubio has a history of supporting abortion regulations with no scientific merit.

Great Russia's Grand Choice

By Maxim Trudolyubov

[New York Times](#), May 16, 2014

MOSCOW — For most of the post-Soviet years, Russia has been torn by a question that haunts its people and their rulers: Do Russians want their country to be an imperialist power feared by other nations or a land whose primary concern is its citizens' well-being?

President Vladimir V. Putin has resolved the issue, or so it seems. He has decided to tip the balance in favor of ambitious expansionist politics rather than domestic development. Prosperity for the people is all very well up to a point, but it has a downside: It produces independent-minded individuals who may try to vote their ruler out of office.

Pursuing grand strategies on the international stage is safer — at least for Russia's powers that be. Defending the Russian-speaking populations of the former Soviet Union creates so much tension both at home and abroad that the domestic economic agenda is dwarfed in comparison. Who cares about economic deterioration, poor public services or endemic corruption when the nation is gripped by imperialist fervor?

But in pushing Russian expansionism is Mr. Putin really making a safer bet? When asked by pollsters about what Russia's priorities should be, respondents are generally divided. In a recent survey by the Levada Center, a Russian nongovernmental research organization, 48 percent favored prioritizing the country's international standing, while 47 percent said they favored a government that concentrated on creating conditions for individual prosperity.

Almost a decade ago, there were indications that this dilemma was close to being resolved in favor of economic progress and peaceful nation-building. According to a poll conducted in 2005 by Levada, more than 60 percent of respondents said they would prefer to live in a nation with higher living standards, while 36 percent counted national "greatness" as a priority. But that resolve proved temporary.

Back in 2007, Michael Porter, a Harvard business professor, advised the Kremlin on economic matters. He and his team then wrote in an analysis of Russian competitiveness that differences of opinion within the government "go beyond the usual policy disagreements that are present in many governments" and "strike to the heart of the goals of the nation itself."

They continued: "Is the goal politics or prosperity for citizens? There is no clear mechanism to resolve these incompatible aspirations. Instead, conflicting signals threaten to cancel each other out and, even worse, create a high level of uncertainty about future policies."

One has to remember that, in a country where the mass media is under strict government control, public opinion may be easily skewed. For several years, especially since street protests erupted in late 2011 and the Kremlin was shocked to discover serious public discontent, the state propaganda machine

has been busy inventing or exaggerating threats the Russians are supposedly facing. Mr. Putin embarked on a radical information offensive to divide and frighten his countrymen.

The current streak of anti-Ukrainian and anti-Western propaganda — fraught with menacing imagery of Ukrainian fascists and their American puppeteers — is only a recent chapter in a larger PR-strategy. Past Kremlin agitprop has included dire warnings of vague conspiracies to overthrow the government, attacks on artists supposedly seeking to humiliate the Russian church, and warnings that homosexuals and a “pedophile lobby” are using the Internet to undermine the traditional family and Russian society.

These threats, fomented by the state-controlled media, are an excuse to increase the security budget, push anti-gay legislation and laws against “blasphemy,” and establish control over the Internet.

The Kremlin’s current propaganda campaign, focused on the “Ukrainian threat,” has been paraded as a justification for military activity along that country’s borders, for possible covert use of force inside Ukraine and for an all-out information war against the West.

Given the intensity of the media blitz, it’s a sign of relative sanity that only half of Russians are choosing sovereign and military greatness over well-being.

“Despite all the propaganda, half of the country is resisting the imperialist temptation,” says Vladimir Magun, a sociologist with the Russian Academy of Sciences.

Mr. Putin’s annexation of Crimea appears to be overwhelmingly popular, but that is because the true cost is being hidden. The Russian public has readily bought the propaganda message that it received Crimea as a free gift, says Mr. Magun, but it’s like shopping in a store with no price tags. A disappointment awaits us at the exit: Stores that don’t display price tags are usually very expensive.

As a result of Mr. Putin’s adventure, Russians can expect higher borrowing costs and a decrease in the value of the ruble, and along with that, a decrease in the value of their savings. Mr. Putin is risking a severe economic downturn and even a regional war.

The president must understand that he won’t be able to avoid economic realities: We can’t race ahead without fundamental improvements in Russia’s global competitiveness. The economy is in recession, and though the effects have not yet trickled down to most Russians, tougher economic times lie ahead. That will bring a day of reckoning.

Mr. Putin will argue that the West is punishing Russia for its international ambitions and that we, the Russian people, will have to persevere.

This is the type of social contract the Soviet government used to impose on its citizens: The enemy is at the gate, and we all have to hunker down. Mr. Putin is bringing this siege mentality back because he knows very well how to work it to his advantage.

The choice between “greatness” on the world stage and domestic prosperity is a false one. Russia can be a formidable world power while flourishing at home.

Maxim Trudolyubov is the opinion page editor of the business newspaper Vedomosti.

Mr. Obama Is Choosing Not To Act On Syria

[Washington Post](#), May 16, 2014

THE PRINCIPAL achievement the Obama administration might claim in an otherwise tragically failed response to Syria’s civil war is eroding. Last September President Obama brokered an agreement with Russia under which the regime of Bashar al-Assad was to give up its stockpile of chemical weapons and join the Chemical Weapons Convention, which prohibits production or use of those horrific arms.

Yet months after the expiration of the February deadline for removing all chemical stocks from Syria’s territory, the regime not only retains a substantial stockpile but also has returned to assaulting

civilian areas with chemicals. The Obama administration's response is all too familiar: It is trying to avoid acknowledging those facts.

Administration spokesmen boast that 92.5 percent of Syria's chemical weapons and precursors have been removed from the country for destruction by the end of June. But Damascus is dragging its feet on delivering the last 27 tons of chemicals used to make deadly sarin gas. According to The Post's Ernesto Londoño and Greg Miller, U.S. officials believe the Assad regime is using the stocks as leverage to retain a network of tunnels and buildings that could be used as storage or production facilities, which the Organisation for Prohibition of Chemical Weapons wants destroyed.

Meanwhile, British, French and U.S. intelligence analysts have concluded that Syria is probably hiding part of its arsenal that it failed to declare, including stocks of sarin and mustard gas, according to news reports. State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki confirmed last week that the United States has been skeptical about whether Assad has revealed the extent of Syria's chemical weapons stockpile.

Finally, evidence is piling up that Assad's forces have been dropping bombs filled with chlorine on opposition-held areas. France's foreign minister told reporters in Washington on Tuesday that there had been at least 14 such attacks since October. Laurent Fabius, who said "things would have been different" had Mr. Obama not backed away from using force in response to a chemical weapons attack last August, said the "regime is still capable of producing chemical weapons and is determined to use them."

Ms. Psaki said April 21 that the United States had "indications" of the use of chlorine, which is not one of the chemicals Syria was obliged to surrender. But the Obama administration has taken the position that it must await an investigation by the OPCW before reaching a definite conclusion. Meanwhile, the chlorine attacks have continued. An unnamed senior U.S. official offered Mr. Londoño and Mr. Miller a frank explanation of this filibuster: "There's reluctance to call attention to it because there's not much we can do about it."

There are, of course, many actions Mr. Obama could take to punish Syria for its use of chemical weapons and to prevent their further deployment. He could begin by granting the opposition's request for antiaircraft missiles to use against the helicopters that are dropping chlorine bombs. He could revive his plan to launch U.S. military strikes against Syrian infrastructure that supports those attacks.

In reality, Mr. Assad is being allowed to disregard his chemical weapons commitment with impunity not because there's nothing the United States can do but because Mr. Obama chooses to do nothing.

How Thailand Is Contributing To The Misery Of Burma's Persecuted Rohingya

By Editorial Board

[Washington Post](#), May 16, 2014

FOR SOME time now, tens of thousands of Rohingya Muslims have been fleeing persecution and economic deprivation in Burma, also known as Myanmar, by boat. While some go off to work and send money home, others have staked all on a permanent exodus, setting sail in search of better times. They don't always find it. Hundreds have died at sea and others have been pulled into a growing vortex of human smuggling.

In 2013, Reuters published a series of remarkable articles that added a new dimension to the Ro-hingya exodus. The news service said its investigation showed that some Thai naval security forces work with smugglers to profit from the fleeing Rohingya. In a July 17 dispatch, Reuters said the lucrative smuggling network transports the Ro-hingya mainly into Malaysia, a Muslim-majority nation that the Rohingya view as a haven. The Reuters investigation showed that the Thai navy has played a role in spotting boats carrying the refugees and putting them in the hands of the smugglers, who demand money

from families for onward passage. According to the Reuters report, Thai naval forces are paid about \$65 per Rohingya “for spotting a boat or turning a blind eye” to the smuggling.

The flight of the Rohingya often ends tragically. The Reuters investigation quoted estimates that in the past year as many as 800 people, mostly Rohingya, have died at sea after their boats broke down or capsized. Those who make it off the seas often are trapped by the smugglers. Men who can't pay the smugglers are handed over to traffickers who sell them into slavery or as indentured servants, while some women are sold as brides.

Reuters won the 2014 Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting for the series . The award cited Jason Szep and Andrew R.C. Marshall for their “courageous reports on the violent persecution of the Rohingya, a Muslim minority in Myanmar that, in efforts to flee the country, often falls victim to predatory human-trafficking networks.”

In addition to Reuters, a Thai news Web site, Phuketwan, has carried stories for seven years describing the flight of the Rohingya.

So what has Thailand done? Instead of seeking to rectify the situation, the Royal Navy has denied mistreating the refugees and decided to intimidate the messenger. Alleging criminal defamation and a breach of national computer crimes law, the navy filed complaints in December against Phuketwan, which had carried the Reuters stories in addition to its own reporting. In recent days, a similar complaint was lodged against Reuters. In both, those convicted could face up to seven years in prison and a fine, according to Phuketwan.

This is a sad case of Thailand's navy attempting to extinguish reporting rather than the misery that the reporting exposed. It is wrong to punish the journalists. But this misguided attempt at coercion is doubly wrong because it attempts to hide the shameful treatment of a people, the Rohingya, who are already suffering far too much.

Read more about this issue: Holly Atkinson and Michael Abramowitz: Burma's Rohingya need protection The Post's View: Unspeakable violence against Muslims in Burma The Post's View: Calibrating U.S. policy on Burma Michael Green and Daniel Twining: U.S. is moving too fast on Burma The Post's View: U.N. Human Rights Council should keep an eye on Burma Desmond Tutu: Burma's chance to do right by all its people

European Union Is Forcing Google To ‘forget’ Some Links In A Blow To Public Information

[Washington Post](#), May 16, 2014

MANY PEOPLE have a link or two they wish wouldn't pop up when they Google their own names. They will appreciate the motivation of an audacious ruling the European Court of Justice handed down Monday. But the ruling could easily damage the flow of information on which the Internet depends.

The case was brought by a Spanish lawyer who wanted Google to remove links to articles legally published in 1998 by a newspaper about old tax debts. Spanish authorities agreed with him, but the country's courts asked European Union jurists for legal guidance. The result was a ruling that is vague and nearly impenetrable, leaving the details for officials, courts and private companies to fill in. But the essential principle is this: The rights of individuals to control information that concerns them “override, as a general rule, the interest of Internet users.”

That logic should be reversed, particularly when public information is at issue. It is dangerous when any government demands that legitimately published material on the public record be obscured, whether to protect individuals' feelings or the reputations of those in high office. Activists, concerned citizens and all sorts of ordinary people — yes, even journalists — could be denied ready access to information that

may seem “irrelevant” to European officials but turns out to be important in public and private life. If there is to be a general principle, it should be to treat search-engine removal requests with extreme caution. Instead, the European court has made it hard for Google to refuse them.

The company may well see a deluge of privacy requests, and it may incur fines if it makes the wrong call. Faced with this equation, the company will have legal and financial incentives to remove links. Google already has received demands from a politician, a doctor and a person convicted of child pornography to remove links to unflattering material, in newspaper articles and on review Web sites, from search results. The court suggested that there must be a balance between privacy protections and the flow of public information and that public officials would get less deference. But that may not be the practical result.

Even if Google tries to keep as many links in its results as possible, there are a variety of difficult lines that someone will have to draw — very possibly to the detriment of the public. Who, for example, counts as a public figure? An ex-politician? A politician’s children, who may run for office in a few years? A significant shareholder in a factory that environmental activists are investigating? Are lawyers’ past tax debts really irrelevant to their potential clients, as the Spanish case suggests? What about reviews on Web sites such as Yelp? Should they be harder to find after some time? How much time?

Concerns about privacy are serious. Companies such as Google may have to work harder to allay these concerns, and countries may not want to leave this difficult balancing entirely to the private sector. But as European governments begin to implement this court decision, they should give more weight to the public’s interest in the free flow of information than the judges did.

Read more about this issue: Justin Moyer: The case against the Google Doodle Richard Cohen: The NSA is doing what Google does The Post’s View: Google’s privacy policy complicates protecting personal data Craig A. Newman: Advancing Internet freedom doesn’t come for free

Why The Mideast Peace Process Is In Tatters

By David Ignatius

[Washington Post](#), May 16, 2014

Sometimes things have to get worse before they get better. Other times, they just get worse. We’ll find out soon which of those descriptions characterizes the collapsed Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

The negotiations were a determined effort by Secretary of State John Kerry and his special adviser, Martin Indyk, to create viable Palestinian and Jewish states. But despite Kerry’s relentless enthusiasm, the two sides never really came close. They are further apart now than when the process began, with the mistrust even deeper.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas wanted a map of the territory that a Palestinian state would occupy. He asked for it when the talks began last July, and he was still demanding one last month when the talks shattered, with the United States pleading for nine more months of negotiations under an American “agreed framework.” But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu would never deliver the map, probably because he wanted to avoid the political battle with settlers who would be outside the future borders of Israel.

The issue of Israeli settlements humiliated the Palestinian negotiators and poisoned the talks, according to statements by U.S. negotiators. When Israel announced 700 new settlements in early April, before the April 29 deadline of the talks, “Poof, that was sort of the moment,” Kerry told a Senate panel. Warned Indyk at a gathering of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, “Rampant settlement

activity — especially in the midst of negotiations — doesn't just undermine Palestinian trust in the purpose of the negotiations; it can undermine Israel's Jewish future."

Abbas was also a huge disappointment. He effectively shut down as a negotiator midway through the talks, whether in response to Netanyahu's intransigence or because of his own unwillingness to make compromises. The high-water mark for Abbas was probably the beginning of the process, when he responded favorably to a security plan drawn up by Gen. John Allen, the retired U.S. commander in Kabul, who had been tapped by Kerry to propose arrangements that would protect Israel if there were a Palestinian state.

Abbas was "ready to put his state's security in American hands," Indyk told the institute. The Palestinian leader had accepted that his future state would be disarmed, but he had previously argued that after Israeli troops left the Jordan Valley — say, five years hence — border security would be guaranteed by NATO (a solution that Israel, mistrustful of the Europeans, opposed). Now Abbas had decided that the United States, Israeli's closest ally, could control his airspace and land access in the future. U.S. negotiators saw it as a big concession, but Israel opposed that, too.

Abbas's brooding turned to truculence. Kerry had gotten Arab League foreign ministers to support recognition of Israel as a Jewish state, a fundamental demand for Netanyahu. Abbas went to the Arabs and got them to reverse this helpful position. When the United States began laying down its agreed framework, with "bridging proposals" to narrow the gaps on the most contentious final issues, such as refugees and Jerusalem, Abbas never responded. Rather than accept the framework "with reservations," as planned, Abbas balked.

U.S. officials sensed that Abbas was in such a deep funk about "that man," as he privately called Netanyahu, that he simply wanted out. Ari Shavit, a prominent Israeli columnist for Haaretz, likened the process to the gloomy existential play "Waiting for Godot."

Israelis and Palestinians both attacked Kerry during the process. A low point came when Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Yaalon described the U.S. secretary of state as "obsessive and messianic." Netanyahu, who maintained a warm relationship with Kerry and often smoked big cigars during their five-hour-plus meetings in Jerusalem, seemed to have shown a hint of flexibility late in the process, offering movement on some core issues. But by then it was too late.

The question is what comes next, after the failure of this intense U.S. effort. The Palestinians are threatening to charge Israel under the Geneva Conventions that protect civilians in occupied territories. The Israelis may retaliate by cutting off money to Abbas's government and announcing new settlements. If this happens, Abbas says he will dissolve the Palestinian Authority — and insist that Israel take on the \$3 billion cost and endless headaches of governing 2.5 million Palestinians. U.S. officials don't think he's bluffing.

If these catastrophic developments ensue, Israel will find itself living with a one-state solution after all. Optimists think this might provide reality therapy, showing that Israel can survive as a healthy Jewish state only if a Palestinian state exists, too. But after this last exercise in frustration and bitterness, there aren't many optimists left.

Our Disconnected Working Class

By Michael Gerson

[Washington Post](#), May 16, 2014

Much about the future health of the republic depends on Harvard sociologist Robert Putnam being wrong. Given the track record of Harvard social scientists, this might appear a reasonable bet. But, in this case, Putnam's diligence and thoughtfulness make for very bad news.

Putnam has spent much of his academic life as America's chief chronicler of declining social institutions — a dour task, cheerfully performed. In the 1990s, he began drawing together the disparate evidence of declining attendance at bowling leagues, church services and Moose lodges. His data points included the falloff in yearly picnic attendance and a rise in the incidence of drivers giving each other the finger.

It was the composite image of one of the most powerful forces of modernity: a rising individualism that “liberates” people from social commitments that make their lives orderly and pleasant.

Even worse, the extent of this trend is not distributed equally in society. Putnam's recent work — to be summarized in a forthcoming book called “Our Kids” — focuses on how the consequences of institutional decline are felt disproportionately among the working class, leaving vast numbers of youths disconnected from the promise of American life.

Upper- and middle-class parents are investing relatively more time and resources in the social development of their children than are working-class parents, at a time when such investments have never been more economically strategic. This widening gap can be measured in parental play and reading time with young children; later, in the engagement of older children in extracurricular activities. Suburban minivans are occupied in taxiing children to tutoring, sports, clubs, youth groups and volunteer activities. By these measures, children from working-class backgrounds are falling behind.

The problem is that early social connectedness is a strong predictor of later success in life — test scores, college attendance and income. So what Putnam calls the “youth class gap” is a source of deep (and perhaps deepening) social division.

Much of modern liberalism — recently inspired and incited by Thomas Piketty's book “Capital in the Twenty-First Century” — is focused on growing income inequality. And surely, at some eventual point along an unbroken trend of increasing returns to capital and diminishing returns to wages, the rich and poor will cease to be fellow citizens in any meaningful sense. But what is most striking about a disproportionate emphasis on income inequality is how distorting and distracting it is.

If income inequality is the main economic problem, it could be solved tomorrow, through confiscation and redistribution. If the main problem is the unequal generation of social capital in institutions such as families, schools and communities, the solutions get more difficult. One task can be accomplished by a tax collector; the other is the work of a civilization.

Putnam's analysis both illuminates the complexity of public policy choices and increases the likelihood that policy solutions could gain broad political support. His proposed explanations for the disproportionate decline in social connectedness among the working class are ideologically diverse. “Decreasing social mobility,” he argues, “represents a perfect storm with multiple, interrelated causes, such as [a] widening income gap and increasing economic insecurity for working-class households, changes in the working-class family structure, [and the] unraveling of the informal social safety net in working-class neighborhoods.”

These arguments are rooted in observation rather than ideology. But they create the possibility of ideological consensus, or at least of ideological compromise. Proposals focused mainly on reducing

income inequality require the political triumph of the left. Conservatives, being conservatives, will not concede leveling as a valid economic goal. But an agenda that increases the rewards of work, encourages stable, engaged families and promotes healthy community institutions could be a shared political enterprise.

Put another way, an abstract argument between advocates of economic liberty and advocates of economic equality can only be settled by victory for one side. The goal of building social capital can (at least in theory) be a virtuous competition. It might include a range of approaches: increasing the earned-income tax credit for single workers (who are often non-custodial parents); working to reduce non-marital births; promoting broader access to higher education; encouraging mentoring; increasing the child tax credit.

The goal of this approach would be to strengthen the social institutions — education, family, work — that strengthen social mobility. And this might have a chance of decreasing the polarization of our economy and the polarization of our politics.

Shareholder Capitalism Vs. Stakeholder Capitalism

By Harold Meyerson

[Washington Post](#), May 16, 2014

Sometimes, a throw-away sentence, a passage not intended to make a major point, ends up telling us a great deal more than the author intended. One such passage popped up in a recent Wall Street Journal story that documented U.S. corporations' scramble to buy overseas companies and thereby shift their legal residency abroad to benefit from lower tax rates. The story noted that roughly 1,700 U.S.-based companies currently are holding \$1.5 trillion offshore rather than bringing it home and paying taxes on it. "But that," the story said, "has left the bulk of their funds for paying dividends or buying back shares effectively out of reach."

Actually, those funds kept cosseted abroad could be put to more uses than buying back shares or paying dividends if those companies brought them home. They might fund more research and development, or start a new product line, or even give employees a raise. But the Journal story has it right. American big business these days is in the business of rewarding shareholders (a group that very much includes chief executives), to the exclusion of any other activity that might help companies flourish. They're in the business of raising their dividends and buying back stock, a practice that effectively raises the value of outstanding shares. Such measures do nothing to enhance a company's long-term value. But long-term value is a diminishing factor in many CEOs' calculations, as they come under pressure from extortion artists — the euphemism is "activist investors" — who demand bigger dividends, and as the CEOs' own fortunes are linked to share value as well.

As The Post's Steven Pearlstein recently documented, 80 percent of the companies listed on the S&P 500 bought back their own shares last year, spending \$477 billion on raising share values by diminishing the number of shares outstanding. The S&P 500 spent 30 percent more on dividends and stock buybacks than they did on capital expenditures. Worse yet, most of these buybacks were funded by these corporations taking on debt. Indeed, of the \$3.4 trillion in debt that U.S. non-financial corporations have incurred since 2009, nearly 87 percent has gone to stock buybacks and dividend payments.

The next time a corporate CEO chastises the federal government for taking on debt to meet current expenses, tell him to clean up his own house first.

Shareholder capitalism in the United States has reached the point of absurdity. More than three decades ago, economist Milton Friedman argued that a company's sole obligation should be to its

shareholders. But even Friedman didn't argue that companies should cut back on everything else or plunge themselves deep into debt just to raise their shareholders' rewards. Nevertheless, that — as that Wall Street Journal so succinctly illustrated — is what shareholder capitalism has become today.

That's why an increasing number of top business reporters and commentators have turned against shareholder capitalism. Two years ago, writing in the Harvard Business Review, that magazine's editorial director, Justin Fox, and Harvard Business School professor Jay Lorsch argued that shareholders performed none of the three basic tasks that, theoretically, justified their claim on corporate profits: They didn't normally provide the companies with capital (which corporations usually get through retained earnings and borrowing), they didn't provide a barometer of the company's value (unless you believe that the share price is always accurate), and they didn't provide a check on management — save to feather their own nests. In a recent issue of the American Prospect, a magazine I help edit, The Post's Pearlstein delivered his own withering critique of shareholder capitalism. And last week, Martin Wolf, the chief economics writer for the Financial Times — the most venerable and respected journal for investors — argued that shareholder capitalism had become so dysfunctional that “we need to rethink ownership and control of limited liability companies” (that is, publicly listed corporations).

Wolf's point is that shareholders are far from the major risk-holders in the modern corporation. That distinction goes to the firm's employees, who have “firm-specific skills.” And yet, Wolf continues, “employees have no voice in what happens to a company to which they might have devoted their lives, while the shareholder of ten seconds does.”

The alternative model to which Wolf implicitly points is the kind of stakeholder capitalism that exists in Germany, where workers, and sometimes public representatives, take half the seats on corporate boards and have a real voice in company decision making. Changing corporate structure in the United States will require an epochal political value, but it's long past time that that battle began.

Rein In China In Its Dispute With Vietnam Over Energy Resources

By Elizabeth Economy And Michael Levi

[Washington Post](#), May 16, 2014

Elizabeth Economy and Michael Levi are senior fellows at the Council on Foreign Relations and the authors of “By All Means Necessary: How China's Resource Quest is Changing the World.”

The China National Overseas Oil Corporation began drilling in Vietnamese-claimed waters last week, accompanied by more than 70 vessels, including armed Chinese warships. At first glance this might look like merely another front in China's quest for natural resources, which has taken Chinese companies to seemingly every corner of the earth.

Yet what is happening in the South China Sea is actually far more dangerous than what has come before — and the forces driving it go well beyond pursuit of energy riches. The United States needs to face up to the full magnitude of the Chinese challenge if it is to have any hope of successfully confronting it. This means not only tough talk but also a willingness to take difficult action.

There has long been speculation that massive oil and gas deposits are locked beneath the South China Sea — 1.4 million square miles bordered by Brunei, China, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam, and claimed in part by all of them. According to the Chinese Ministry of Land and Resources, the area might contain as much as 400 billion barrels of oil, surpassing the bounties of the Middle East.

Most informed estimates, though, are much smaller. The United States Geological Survey estimated in 2010 that the region's undiscovered oil (much of which will never be attractive to produce) totals a far

smaller 11 billion barrels. It is difficult to believe that China would risk armed conflict for such modest stakes.

Two other forces are essential to understanding what is going on. One is nationalism: The drilling is taking place near the Paracel Islands, which sit within a disputed area of the South China Sea, roughly 120 miles from Vietnam's coast and well within Vietnam's 200-mile exclusive economic zone. But China claims the islands based on historical usage and effective exercise of sovereignty, having occupied them since 1974. Backing off from the Paracels would deal a blow to China's prestige, while underlining Chinese control over the islands would strengthen the leadership's legitimacy at home.

Chinese leaders are also motivated by a desire to control the sea lanes of the South China Sea. More than \$5 trillion of trade passes through the increasingly crowded waters per year. That includes almost one-third of world seaborne oil trade and more than three-quarters of Chinese oil imports (as well as most of the oil destined for Japan, South Korea and Taiwan). The Chinese navy may be too weak to challenge U.S. dominance in critical Middle East sea lanes, or even to exercise control over the critical Straits of Malacca, but by operating naval forces across the South China Sea it can gain greater confidence that the United States will not be able to disrupt its supplies.

Beyond these two motivations, it does not hurt that Chinese oil companies are also eager to operate in the region. By cloaking its military excursion in commercial garb, Beijing might hope to defuse some of the inevitable opposition.

That gambit has not paid off. China's latest move, which came as a genuine surprise to Vietnam and other nations, undermines Beijing's insistence that strong relations within the region are its top foreign policy priority. It also calls into question China's commitment to its current working-group talks with Vietnam on joint resource development in the South China Sea.

The United States has said it won't take a stand on the sovereignty dispute, and has called the two parties to resolve their differences peacefully. This is not enough: The United States ought to call China's bluff and make clear the real stakes. The United States and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations should present a unified front in refusing to recognize unilateral assertions of claims in disputed territories.

Even more important, the United States must be prepared to give life to its rhetorical position. Although it does not have a treaty obligation to defend Vietnam, its rebalancing to Asia is premised on its role as the primary guarantor of stability in the Asia Pacific. Chinese actions challenge that.

Vietnam has reiterated its commitment to peaceful resolution of the dispute. If China does not reciprocate, the United States should be prepared to offer support to Vietnam through an increased naval presence. This would give Washington the ability to assess Chinese capabilities and to help de-escalate the situation. Other options, such restrictions on the Chinese oil corporation's activities in the United States, could also be considered. If the United States can't back up its words with actions, its credibility in promising to uphold peace and stability in the region will be gutted.

Paying For Your Fair Share In An App-based Economy

By Catherine Rampell

[Washington Post](#), May 16, 2014

SAN FRANCISCO

"Organic." "Artisanal." "Community-based." "Social." "Local." "Fresh." "Natural." And the godfather of them all: "Green."

These words used to have specific definitions and usages before they were hijacked by businesses and brand managers wanting to connote vague warmth-and-fuzziness.

“Sharing” is now at risk of linguistic appropriation and buzzword-ification, too — in this case by the entrepreneurs of Silicon Valley.

This week I attended a conference here called “SHARE: Catalyzing the New Sharing Economy.” As I learned from my fellow attendees — and as you may already know from reading about taxi-drivers’ scuffles with Uber or the New York attorney general’s battles with Airbnb — the app-based “sharing economy” is vast and growing. It includes “home-sharing” (hosting strangers in your house, for money); “ride-sharing” (driving people around, for money); “food-sharing” (cooking for other people, for money); “closet-sharing” (giving away your used clothing, for money); “boat-sharing” (letting other people use your boat, for money); “book-sharing” (shipping off your old textbooks to needy students, for money); “parking-space sharing” (letting a stranger park in your driveway, for money); and pretty much every other kind of rental or purchase transaction you think of, but conducted through a decentralized network of “peers” newly haloed with the altruistic mission of “sharing.”

One woman told me she had recently quit her job to manage Airbnb properties full-time and called herself a “home-sharer.” I asked if providing lodging to tourists counted as “sharing” when she was charging them for this service. Isn’t that just, umm, a hotel? Or maybe a short-term rental? Well, she said, it wasn’t like she was getting rich like real hotels do (and so why should she have to pay hotel taxes?).

As you can tell from all my scare-quotes, I left the day’s events thoroughly confused about what “sharing” really is in the modern age. So the day after attending SHARE, I decided to consult another group of experts on the topic: preschoolers.

After all, sharing is one of the main things they learn. And these were not just any preschoolers, but preschoolers in Silicon Valley — at the Oshman Family JCC preschool in Palo Alto, to be exact — so they should have a particularly fine appreciation of the more contemporary, app-driven nuances of the word.

“Sharing is a really big part of their curriculum,” one of the teachers assured me.

Notebook in hand, I confronted the chubby-cheeked Silicon Valley scions, my somewhat unfocused focus group. (Disclosure: My nephew attends this preschool. Rest assured, though, I interrogated his classmates with the same merciless objectivity as I would any other group of 3- to 5-year-olds.)

“What is sharing?” I asked, watching their expressions carefully.

“It’s giving people a turn,” offered a pint-size brunette. “It’s giving stuff to people,” said a fidgety little boy.

Okay, easy enough. That, of course, was the softball question. I asked a tougher follow-up: “Let’s say you want to play with my toy, and I say, ‘Only if you give me a cookie.’ Is that sharing?”

“No!” the kids cried unanimously.

“What is it?” I asked.

“That’s being mean!” said one girl. “Don’t be mean.”

I told her I wasn’t sure she had it completely right; offering a toy in exchange for a cookie-based currency isn’t necessarily mean. She then agreed it was more like a trade but was still pretty insistent that it wasn’t sharing, nor was any other transaction where I got paid for giving something away.

At its most benign, calling things “sharing” that are actually no different from traditional commerce is just empty marketing. It might also crowd out other activities that used to be done for altruistic purposes (like donating your old clothes to Goodwill rather than selling them on the Internet, or offering a friend a ride to the airport instead of charging for the service).

But more perniciously, this semantic sleight of hand has been used to justify tax evasion and other kinds of law-skirting. Of course you shouldn’t have to pay hotel taxes if you’re just “sharing” your home!

And of course you shouldn't have to submit to health-department restaurant inspections if you're just "sharing" your kitchen with paying customers every night! Or get a taxi medallion or commercial insurance if you're just "sharing" your car!

There's nothing inherently unethical about monetizing skills or capital that are otherwise lying fallow, and no doubt many of these new "sharing economy" platforms are helping some 99-percenters make money in flexible, rewarding, creative ways. But to call these activities "sharing" is an insult to the intelligence of existing businesses, regulators and 5-year-olds everywhere.

Clinton Gets The GOP Treatment

By Eugene Robinson

[Washington Post](#), May 16, 2014

Republican panic at the prospect of facing Hillary Clinton in the 2016 presidential race has suddenly reached Godzilla-nearing-Tokyo proportions.

The election is more than two years away, and Clinton hasn't even decided whether to run. But none of this seems to matter to the GOP strategists and spinmeisters who are launching the whole arsenal at her — smears, innuendo, false charges. Already, they've moved beyond distorting her record to simply making stuff up.

As these damp squibs clatter harmlessly to the ground, it's useful to remember that Clinton has seen it all before. And I mean all. Anyone who thinks she'll be rattled or intimidated hasn't been paying attention the past few decades.

If anything, Republicans are succeeding in raising Clinton's profile and perhaps making her a more sympathetic figure. This was certainly the impact of Karl Rove's smarmy and unfounded recent speculation about her health.

In December 2012, Clinton, ill with a virus, fell in her home and suffered a concussion, spent three days in the hospital, wore corrective glasses briefly for double vision — meanwhile going back to work as secretary of state — and made what to all appearances was a full recovery.

Rove grossly inflated the episode to "30 days in the hospital" and "traumatic brain injury." Appearing later on Fox News, he insisted that Clinton's health "is going to be an issue." The Clinton camp responded that "there are no words for this level of lying" and gave assurances that Clinton is in perfect health. But Rove's intent was clear: Fabricate an "issue," toss it out and see if it sticks.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), an all-but-announced candidate for the GOP nomination, was even less subtle, claiming that Clinton's term at the State Department was characterized by "massive failures." He mentioned her inability to get Russian President Vladimir Putin to behave like a model citizen — something that no secretary of state, as I recall, has managed to do. Oh, and he mentioned Benghazi.

Benghazi, Benghazi, Benghazi. . . . Get used to that name, because you'll hear it a zillion times if Clinton runs. We've seen from her appearances before Congress, however, that she answers questions about the tragedy forcefully and well. I wouldn't bet my political future on the dubious prospect that she'll meekly go away if the Benghazi chant is raised to a din.

Given that Clinton's actual record at State is unpromising for Republicans to attack, there is now an effort to foul the atmospherics of her tenure. Most far-fetched is the suggestion that Boko Haram might not have kidnapped those nearly 300 Nigerian schoolgirls if Clinton had pushed — against the advice of diplomats, experts and the Nigerian government — to designate the group as a terrorist organization. There is no basis for this unlikely notion. Boko Haram has been on the terrorist list since November, and it didn't stop them.

If she runs, this won't be Clinton's first rodeo. It won't be the first time that bitter opponents have spun a false history out of whole cloth and tried to pin it on her. The paranoid fantasy over Vince Foster's suicide comes to mind.

The reason for all this panic is obvious: Republicans fear that if Clinton runs, she'll win.

Polls consistently show her beating all hypothetical GOP opponents, both nationally and in key swing states. New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie was competitive, for a time, but the George Washington Bridge scandal has sent his numbers south. Jeb Bush, if he decides to run — and manages to win the nomination — might have the kind of crossover appeal that would give Clinton trouble. But at present, none of the other frequently cited contenders seems much of a threat.

Nothing is guaranteed, of course. You will recall that Clinton was supposed to steamroll her way to the 2008 Democratic nomination, only to have the junior senator from Illinois get in the way. In 2016 she might well face a challenge from the party's activist left.

If Clinton should get the nomination, her Republican opponent — no matter who it is — would be no pushover. But the possibility of electing the first woman as president would likely stoke the enthusiasm of Democratic voters to the point where the party's structural advantages — overwhelming support among minorities and women — come into play. Clinton might win big.

Hence all the premature mudslinging, which reeks of desperation. Republicans hear the sound in the distance. They feel it in their bones. Stomp. Stomp. Stomp.

The Sound And The Fury — And The Tweet

By Charles Krauthammer

[Washington Post](#), May 16, 2014

Mass schoolgirl kidnapping in Nigeria — to tweet or not to tweet? Is hashtagging one's indignation about some outrage abroad an exercise in moral narcissism or a worthy new way of standing up to bad guys?

The answer seems rather simple. It depends on whether you have the power to do something about the outrage in question. If you do, as in the case of the Obama administration watching Russia's slow-motion dismemberment of Ukraine, it's simply embarrassing when the State Department spokeswoman tweets the hashtag #UnitedForUkraine.

That is nothing but preening, a visual recapitulation of her boss's rhetorical fatuousness when he sternly warns that if the rape of this U.S. friend continues, we are prepared to consider standing together with the "international community" to decry such indecorous behavior — or some such.

When a superpower, with multiple means at its disposal, reverts to rhetorical emptiness and hashtag activism, it has betrayed both its impotence and indifference. But if you're an individual citizen without power, if you lack access to media, drones or special forces, then hashtagging your solidarity with the aggrieved is a fine gesture and perhaps even more.

The mass tweet is, after all, just the cyber equivalent of the mass petition. And people don't sneer at petitions. Historically, they've been a way for individuals, famous or anonymous, to make their views known and, by weight of number, influence authorities who, in democratic societies, might respond to such expressions of popular sentiment.

The hashtag campaign for the Nigerian girls — originated in Nigeria by Nigerians — was meant to do exactly that: pressure the Nigerian government to respond more seriously to the kidnapping. It has already had this effect. And attention from abroad has helped magnify the pressure.

As always, however, we tend to romanticize the power of the tweet. For a while, Twitter (and other social media) was seen as a game-changer that would empower the masses and invert the age-old relationship between the ruler and ruled.

This is mostly rubbish. Yes, the tweet improves upon the mass petition because tweets contain an instant return address that allows for mass mobilization. People can be summoned to gather together somewhere — Tahrir Square, for example.

At which point, alas, the age-old dynamics of power take hold. If the tyrant, brandishing guns and tanks, is cruel and determined enough, your tweets will mean nothing. Try it at Tahrir or Tiananmen, in Damascus or Tehran. They will shoot and torture you, then maybe even let you keep your precious smartphone.

Michelle Obama's tweeting #BringBackOurGirls for the nearly 300 schoolgirls kidnapped by Boko Haram terrorists poses an interesting case of the semi-official tweet. This was no exercise in vanity. She does advise the man who does deploy the forces and who in this case provided serious concrete support — intelligence, reconnaissance, on-the-ground advisers — to help fight the evil.

What was peculiar about her tweet, however, was its uniqueness: It's the first time she's expressed herself so personally and publicly about a foreign crisis. And she was nicely candid about the reason: "In these girls, Barack and I see our own daughters."

The identity of the victims here — young, black and female — undoubtedly helps explain the worldwide reaction. Two months earlier, Boko Haram had raided a Christian school and, after segregating the boys, brutally murdered 59 of them. That elicited no hashtag campaign against Boko Haram. Nor was there any through the previous years of Boko Haram depredations — razing Christian churches, burning schools, killing infidels of all ages.

Nonetheless, selective outrage is not necessarily hypocrisy. There are a million good causes in the world, and one cannot be devoted to all of them. People naturally gravitate to those closest to their heart. Thus last week's unlikely sight: a group of congresswomen holding a news conference demanding immediate U.S. action — including the possible use of drones — against Boko Haram.

These were members, like Sheila Jackson Lee, not heretofore known for hawkish anti-jihadist sentiments. No matter. People find their own causes. Their sincerity is to be credited and their commitment welcomed.

The American post-9/11 response to murderous jihadism has often been characterized, not least by our own president, as both excessive and morally suspect. There is a palpable weariness with the entire enterprise. Good, therefore, that new constituencies for whom jihadism and imposed Shariah law ranked low among their urgent concerns should now be awakening to the principal barbarism of our time.

Trending now (once again): anti-jihadism, a.k.a. the War on Terror.

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL STORIES

More Delaware Children Living In Poverty

[Wilmington \(DE\) News Journal](#), May 15, 2014

The percentage of Delaware children living in poverty has doubled since the 2008 recession, according to a report that tracks the well-being of state youth.

The continued rise in poverty is disturbing because children living in poverty can suffer a disproportionate share of deprivation, hardship and negative outcomes in their education, health and general well-being.

Released this week, the Kids Count study shows 20.6 percent of Delaware children live in poverty. Although slightly better than the national rate of 21.9 percent, it's much worse than the under 12 percent rate of 2007 and continues to climb.

Janice Barlow, director of the Kids Count report, doesn't see the trend changing in the near future.

"I'm a pretty optimistic person and I have hope, but I think it really will take people in positions of power who are making some decisions to really care about kids," Barlow said. "And more than just talking the talk but actually putting their money where their mouth is and investing in children."

The report, now in its 19th year, is designed to draw attention to the well-being of children and serve as a call to action. So far, Barlow does not see this happening as much as she would like.

"I do see pockets of it happening. It's just not systemic yet," she said. Barlow did note Gov. Jack Markell's proposal to expand the home visiting program – a free program to help mothers and their families during pregnancy and after child birth – as one effort being made.

Story: Lawmakers OK Markell's urban rebuilding program

Story: Fast-food workers demand higher wages

Alexis Simms, a parent of three, was not surprised to hear some of the report's poverty numbers.

"I can see that there are more children who are in need, more families who are in need," Simms said, adding she sees it in the school at which she works. "Hopefully now that this report came out, there will be more awareness and hopefully more people in politics ... will start trying to make policies that are going to benefit these children that need the help."

Children from low-income families are also more likely to experience poor health and to die during childhood. The state's infant mortality rate of 8.1 deaths in the first year of life per 1,000 births continues to be high and outpaces the nation's rate of 6.4 per 1,000.

The report points out that low-income children score lower on standardized tests and are more likely to be retained in grade or to drop out. Low-income teens are more likely to have out-of-wedlock births and to experience violent crime.

They're also more likely to end up as poor adults.

The report is not all negative. Some bright spots include a decrease in the state's low birth weight births, although still higher than the national rate.

In Delaware, 8.8 percent of children born weigh less than 5.5 pounds, while nationally, 8.2 percent of children are considered low birth weight. Low birth weight carries a range of health risks for children, according to the report. Babies who are very low in birth weight have a 25 percent chance before turning 1.

The state's teen pregnancy rates continued to drop too.

Just a decade ago, Delaware's teen pregnancy rate was higher than the national rate. But a few years ago, Delaware's teen pregnancy rate dropped below the national average and continues to drop at a faster rate. The most current numbers show the state's births to 15- to 17-year-olds at 18.2 per thousand, while the national rate is 19.1.

"I'm glad to hear that," said Golden Ford-Jones, director of the Delaware Adolescent Program Inc.'s Wilmington campus. The program serves pregnant and parenting teens and their families.

Ford-Jones, who had not seen the study, attributed the reduction to more awareness in the state toward reducing teen pregnancy.

"There is a lot more awareness for students, for staff and agencies such as Planned Parenthood, Child's Inc. and even within the schools," she said.

But the poverty-related numbers were the most striking including the finding that for the first time more than half of students in public schools qualify for free or reduced-price meals.

"This is double what it was a decade ago," Barlow said. "It just keeps going up."

Sheila Davis, who was dropping her children off at the Latin American Community Center in Wilmington Thursday, said she's glad to hear the report highlights the need for food, especially for young children.

"It makes [people] more aware that more children are in poverty than what they may know because some of the parents may ... not want people to know that they don't have food to feed their children," Davis said. "Sometimes pride steps in the way."

The combination of risks is greatest for children who experience poverty when they are younger and for those who live in deep and/or persistent poverty.

A two-parent married household earns on average three times the amount a single-parent household earns.

"It's pretty dramatic," Barlow said. "Particularly children who are in single-parent homes are also very at risk for being at poverty at higher rates than those in married parent homes."

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Child poverty

20.6% of Delaware children vs. 21.9 percent in the U.S.

Teen pregnancy

The rate of girls ages 15-17 giving birth continues to go down 18.2 per 1000 in Delaware vs. 19.1 per 1,000 in the U.S.

Infant mortality

The Delaware rate is going up with 8.1 deaths in the first year of life per 1,000 births compared with the national rate of 6.4 deaths in the first year per 1,000 births.

Source: Kids Count report

Kids Count Report released and shows Child Poverty at double last years rate.

EPA Seeks Tighter Rein On Refinery Toxic Air Releases

[Wilmington \(DE\) News Journal](#), May 15, 2014

The Environmental Protection Agency on Thursday proposed its first update in years for toxic air pollution controls at refineries around the nation, including a first-time fenceline monitoring mandate long sought by some Delaware citizen groups.

Federal officials said the measures, including new requirements to limit toxic pollution from storage tanks and open-air emergency incineration flares, would make a "visible difference" in community health.

In January, state officials removed an air monitoring device that had been placed on a utility pole on the Delaware City Refinery's property outside its fence as part of a citizen-led, state subsidized air monitoring project. Company officials said one of their security officers "questioned a local activist" about the device prior to the refinery's call to the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control for its removal.

Story: Soot monitoring device removed at PBF refinery

Environmental groups have long questioned the adequacy of DNREC's air monitoring efforts outside the refinery, pointing out that public odor complaints – sometimes miles away – often follow pollution releases despite company reports of "no offsite impact."

Earlier story: Fire, outage at refinery brings odor complaints

Story: PBF Energy first-quarter earnings triple 2013 mark

"The common-sense steps we are proposing will protect the health of families who live near refineries and will provide them with important information about the quality of the air they breathe," EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy said in a written statement on the proposals.

Fenceline monitoring results will be made public, the agency noted, adding that the changes should have "no noticeable impact" on the cost of products from the nation's 150 refineries.

Sierra Club member Amy Roe said she is optimistic that the EPA will approve more-protective requirements for refineries, and said that state citizens "have encouraged the EPA to address serious deficiencies" involving emissions, reporting and community understanding on air quality issues.

But Roe also said she was concerned about regulatory loopholes and state delays in completing major permit review and public participation in decisions.

PBF Energy spokesman Michael Karlovich said Thursday that his company has not yet reviewed the EPA proposals. The American Petroleum Institute has opposed the changes.

"With this proposal, EPA adds to the list of new regulations impacting refineries that come with enormous costs but questionable environmental benefits," Howard Feldman, API director of regulatory and scientific affairs, said in a statement.

Feldman said the EPA "has already concluded the risks associated with refinery emissions are low and the public is protected with an ample margin of safety."

Lisa Garcia, an officer with the national environmental group Earthjustice, said that the public has a right to know what pollutants are crossing refinery boundaries.

"For the EPA to include fenceline monitoring and a fenceline air standard in today's proposal is a very significant step and a win for communities," Garcia said.

In 2012, PBF Energy's Delaware City Refinery ranked 28th nationwide among petroleum industry pipe and smokestack sources of benzene, a known carcinogen, and 73rd for leaks of the same toxic chemical from thousands of valves and other undefined sources. It ranked 29th the same year for releases of toluene, a hazardous pollutant and contributor to smog.

Proposals announced Thursday would include a requirement for fenceline monitoring of benzene emissions. Full approval would cut benzene, toluene and xylene emissions by 5,600 tons a year nationwide, and release of other air pollutants by 52,000 tons per year.

By comparison, EPA records show that Delaware City in 2012 released 9,302 pounds of benzene from permitted and controlled release points in 2012, and 2,332 pounds from undefined leaks.

Delaware City ranked 39th nationwide across the petroleum industry based on its total toxic air release from pipes and smokestacks – 268,266 pounds, with another 9,245 pounds from leaks. But the site was the highest of any petroleum industry site in the country for pounds of toxic pollution discharged to water.

Final standards are scheduled to be released in April, after public hearings in Houston and Los Angeles.

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Railway Trail Plans Unveiled In Lewes

[Wilmington \(DE\) News Journal](#), May 15, 2014

Jay Lagree, an avid cyclist, used to ride his bike from his home in Rehoboth Beach, south along Del. 1 to Bethany and then north again.

But these days, he's shifted his daily ride to the network of trails that link Rehoboth and Lewes.

"I used to ride Route 1," he said. "But it's more dangerous than it needs to be."

Lagree is among the growing number of resort-area residents who use the Breakwater Junction Trail as a link between the two coastal towns.

And Thursday, he came out to look at plans for a 1.5 mile long trail expansion – one that could ultimately grow to 18 miles and link Lewes to Georgetown – along state-owned railroad right-of-way.

That longer east-west trail is just a dream at the moment but state officials on Thursday outlined drawings for Phase I – the small section from Gills Neck Road to Savannah Road in Lewes. That phase, expected to cost \$1.5 million, would include a trail head with restrooms and 30-car parking lot near the proposed new Lewes Library. Eventually, it would provide a second connection with the Breakwater Junction Trail through the proposed Showfield residential housing development.

Maps of the proposed plan were on display at the Lewes Library and state transportation officials and their consultants were available to answer questions for the dozens of people who came out to see where the trail would go and how it would look.

"Over all, I think it's a very good plan," said Lewes Mayor-elect Theodore Becker. "It provides good access and the rails with trails concept is widely used throughout the country."

The state owns the rail line from Lewes to Georgetown – a large right-of-way that includes the train tracks and roadbed along with green space on both sides. The plan, said Marco Boyce, a planning supervisor with the state Department of Transportation, is to carve out a paved, 10-foot wide trail along the open area near the tracks.

There is still train traffic on the rail line but it is infrequent and slow-moving, he said.

On average, three rail cars pass through Lewes once a week, at a speed of about 5 miles per hour, he said. The entire right-of-way is 66 feet, with plenty of room for a 10-foot-wide trail.

State officials envision the trail being used by people running errands, shopping and looking for an alternative to driving their vehicles, Boyce said. The trail will only be open to pedestrians and non-motorized vehicles such as bikes.

The plans on display Thursday were a first step. Public comments will be considered and final plans will be drawn starting in the fall. Meanwhile, state officials are looking for a funding source for the project. It is unlikely that construction would start prior to 2016.

Meanwhile, several of the people who came out to view the plans, live along the second phase of the trail. Many still have questions about access to the trail. In addition, some are concerned about security and screening.

But Thursday, many of them, like Nassau Gardens resident Tom Olkowski, joked that they'd be in assisted living before the trail expanded in to their neighborhood.

"A number of area residents have concerns and others are in favor of it," he said.

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Lawmakers OK Markell's Urban Rebuilding Program

[Wilmington \(DE\) News Journal](#), May 15, 2014

Gov. Jack Markell's plan to revitalize Delaware communities hit by urban blight, crime and economic stagnation cleared the General Assembly after House lawmakers unanimously passed the measure Thursday evening.

The governor's Downtown Development District initiative, which creates as many as 15 Downtown Development Districts eligible for tax credits and other incentives, now awaits his signature. About \$7 million for the program was allocated in bond bill money within Markell's budget.

Since the plan's announcement earlier this year, community leaders from across Delaware have expressed their support and interest in taking part in the program, hoping to use the designations to turn around areas in need of refurbishment, new construction, beautification or redevelopment.

Wilmington officials have said they'd like to identify potential projects as soon as lawmakers approve the program. One council member has said it is perfectly fitted for an initiative in the city's east side. The project would include the refurbishment and construction of more than 100 homes and beautification through the planting of trees and vegetable gardens.

Story: More Delaware children living in poverty

Dover city officials have said the designations could bring some mixed-used developments to the area and tackle vacant lots and buildings.

Rep. Donald Blakey, R-Camden, said he supported the legislation, but wanted to be sure the plan was a redevelopment initiative and not a re-gentrification plan.

"If Dover gets the shot, Queen, Reed, Kirkwood and New Streets are the streets that at one time were gentrified streets for African Americans that have fallen into disrepair," he said. "I want to see that recovered, but not people displaced."

Dover's city planning director, Anne Marie Townsend, allayed those fears, saying the city takes every step possible to ensure anyone displaced by development is connected to services for help.

Municipalities have to apply for the designation, which would first be evaluated by the Cabinet Committee on State Planning Issues. Markell would make the final designations. The governor has said he hopes to release the first round of applications during the summer. The first round would designate one to three districts. Counties could not receive a second designation until all three have a district.

Investors would be entitled to grants administered by the Delaware State Housing Authority valued at up to 20 percent of their construction costs. An investment of at least \$25,000 is needed in a project before the incentives kick in.

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Wilmington To Begin Paying For Its Water Usage

[Wilmington \(DE\) News Journal](#), May 15, 2014

Wilmington residents and others could have to pay more than their fair share for water because the city doesn't pay for service and takes too much from its utilities budget, council leaders said.

Council President Theo Gregory and council budget chairman Bud Freel said the city should start paying for the water it uses, which could provide the utility nearly \$1 million a year. Freel also believes Mayor Dennis P. Williams, who is proposing utility rate increases for customers, is taking too much out of the water fund to cover claimed expenses for city services provided to the utility.

The city, which isn't billed for its water use, plans to start paying into the water and sewer budget by the fiscal year that begins July 1, 2015. The payments that year will only cover 25 percent of that amount. Within four years, the city will pay the full amount.

Freel has taken issue with the city's plan to start paying its water bills next year, arguing payments should start sooner so ratepayers aren't covering all the costs.

"The city's got to pay its fair share of the water and sewer fund," Freel said. "We owe that to all our customers out there who pay water rates, and that's what upsets me."

Council President Theo Gregory said he agrees with Freel's concerns about the city delaying payment on its water bills. He said the current system could cause the water and sewer budget to take a hit in the future and see its bond rating drop.

"This process has to start. We want to make sure our water and sewer enterprise is fiscally sound," Gregory said.

Cleon Cauley, who was recently moved from Public Works commissioner to mayoral chief of staff, issued a written statement saying the city's timeline to start paying its water and sewer bills was set to give the departments adequate time to budget for the new charges. Other reasons he listed including allotting time to evaluate the feasibility of stormwater credits for city properties.

Cauley's statement said the city's payment into the water and sewer fund will soften the level of future rate increases.

Freel doesn't buy the city's reasons for holding off on the payments.

He said council members last year were told the payments would start this past January and then were told that the money would start coming in during the fiscal year starting July 1. Williams recently delayed the start again until July 2015.

"Why is it going to take us another year to do this?" Freel said. "You as a city resident, you don't get that option, do you? It has to be reciprocated."

The Finance Committee on Monday will meet to decide on whether to send Williams' proposed budget, property tax increase and water, sewer and stormwater rate increases to the full council.

Williams is proposing to raise water and sewer rates by 8 percent and stormwater charges by 7 percent, raising the typical customer's monthly bill by \$3.78. A typical customer pays approximately \$574 annually in water, sewer and stormwater bills, according to city figures.

The water and sewer rate increases will raise \$3.2 million, but will, in part, be offset by ongoing drops in water use. That means the total water and sewer revenues of \$46.2 million will only go up by \$323,000.

The stormwater fee increases will raise \$563,000.

Freel said he began pressing the city to start paying water and sewer bills two years ago because the water and sewer budget contributes some money to the general fund, the primary source of money for common city services such as police, fire and parks and recreation.

The water and sewer money that goes into the general fund offsets city costs to support city utilities, according to city documents. That means the water and sewer money pays for utility-related work of city employees mostly paid by the general fund.

For the fiscal year starting July 1, the water and sewer budget will pay \$4.9 million, or about \$500,000 more, into the general fund.

Freel said he finds the general fund's charges to the water and sewer budget a little troubling. He said the water and sewer budget's payment next fiscal year will be bigger because of extra spending from the city. Yet, he said he's not sure if any of that extra spending is tied to supporting utilities.

"You could have the budget of one of those departments go up because of the formula they worked, and the water and sewer fund will still be charged," Freel said. "It's a very difficulty thing to explain. I'm not sure I support the assumption it makes."

Freel said some of the rate increases can be tied to the additional money the water and sewer fund will put into the city's general fund next fiscal year.

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city plan

The city plans to start paying into the water and sewer budget by the fiscal year that begins July 1, 2015. The payments that year will only cover 25 percent. Within four years, the city will pay the full amount .

Officer's Grievance Claims NAACP Pressured Carey

[Wilmington \(DE\) News Journal](#), May 15, 2014

Former Dover mayor Carleton Carey's decisions to select the city's new chief of police and deputy were influenced by the NAACP, according to claims in one of the grievances filed by five high-ranking city police officers.

The grievance, filed by Capt. Robert Scott, is among those claiming Carey violated employment and affirmative action policies and abused his authority by influencing the appointment of a deputy police chief.

The grievances, filed in early April, led to a \$300,000 settlement between the city and the officers. Carey resigned as mayor in late April after council members pressured him to do so.

Earlier story: Former mayor's police meddling to cost Dover \$300,000

Story: NAACP remarks 'not being racist,' Sussex Councilman Wilson says

Scott's grievance claimed Carey met with representatives from the NAACP in late March, several weeks after a Kent County Superior Court grand jury decided not to indict a Dover police officer accused of police brutality during a 2013 arrest.

During the meeting, Carey placed a call to the department, requesting the "African American Demographic by Rank" for the department. He later called Scott asking him to verify the data, the grievance said.

Police Chief Paul M. Bernat named Lt. Marvin Mailey, the former head of the internal affairs unit and an African American, as deputy chief. The selection was made based on race, and did not properly consider other officers holding more years of experience or a higher rank, the officers claim in the grievances.

But both Carey and the NAACP deny the claims.

Carey said Thursday he did meet with the group, but it didn't focus on his selection.

The settlement requires the city to pay four officers – Capt. Tim Stump, Lts. Dan McKeown, Jason Pires and J. Eric Richardson – \$50,000 each by the end of May. Scott will be paid \$100,000, half by the end of this month, the other half in January 2015.

Lamar Gunn, vice president of the NAACP chapter in Dover, said Thursday that someone in the community needs to consider filing an injunction stopping the city from using taxpayer money to pay a settlement based on shoddy allegations.

"I can bet every dollar that I have that if he (Mailey) had complained of discrimination, he would not have received a \$100,000 or \$50,000 pay out, or how about a zero-dollar payout to avoid the cost of litigation," he said.

Gunn said he was not at the meeting described in Scott's grievance, but was involved and briefed on discussions between the parties.

"Mayor Carey is not influenced by the NAACP, please," he said. "That's a joke."

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Minorities Will Like It Here

[Wilmington \(DE\) News Journal](#), May 15, 2014

Despite the recent headlines out of Sussex, most Delawareans think this state is a pretty decent place for racial and ethnic minorities to live.

Delaware came in tied for seventh with Nevada in a Gallup poll published Wednesday, with 87 percent of Delaware residents saying where they live is a good place for minorities.

The 50-state Gallup poll was conducted June-December 2013, with at least 600 residents in each state being questioned.

It's possible some of those 600 Delawareans polled then may want to change their answers now following the antics of a couple of Sussex councilmen Tuesday. The two, Sam Wilson and Vance Phillips, made a show of withholding \$100 grants from an NAACP youth group, saying the NAACP must be involved in discrimination because of its name.

But enough about Wilson and Phillips. We should not paint the rest of Delaware based on those two elected politicians.

After all, we could be in West Virginia. Residents of that state, which has a population that is 93 percent white, came in at the bottom of the list with just 73 percent thinking it was a good place for minorities.

Hawaii (who wouldn't think it was a great place for anyone to live) was at the top of the rankings at 95 percent. Texas, Alaska, New Mexico, Washington, New Jersey, Delaware and Nevada round out the top eight.

All have relatively large minority populations of one race/ethnicity or another, according to the report, but Delaware is the only one with a relatively high black population at 21 percent.

So congratulations Delaware. We may have our dumb and dumber moments, but overall, we should be #delaproud so many of us think this state is a good place for ALL people to live.

Related: 'Racists and bigots and prayer, oh my'

Previous: What makes you feel #delaproud

Share in the Only in Delaware conversation 24/7 on [delawareonline](http://delawareonline.com). Contact Jeffrey Gentry at jgentry@delawareonline.com. Follow him on Twitter: @jeffreygentry

AstraZeneca And JP Morgan Close \$44M Property Deal

[Wilmington \(DE\) News Journal](#), May 15, 2014

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One of the most-watched office sales deals this year in New Castle County closed today, officials confirmed.

JP Morgan Chase is now the owner of a 58-acre slice of what was formerly part of the AstraZeneca complex on Concord Pike. The deal closed for exactly \$44 million, according to New Castle County officials who received paperwork this afternoon. The transfer tax brought \$660,000 to the county and \$660,000 to the state, according to the county finance office.

JP Morgan expected to occupy the offices beginning in early 2015, according to a statement released today by the company. Earlier this year the deal, and a \$44 million price, was reported by unnamed sources to The News Journal and the Philadelphia Business Journal.

The property will give Chase more room as it grows its Delaware-based employee base. At the same time, AstraZeneca has been trimming its workforce in the state, which lead it to put offices up for sale last year.

“Delaware continues to be a great place to conduct business, and for our employees to live and work. Currently employing more than 7,500 in the state, we have added more than 1,200 jobs over the past two years and expect that number to increase,” Chase said in a statement released today.

Chase now owns was known as the AstraZeneca “south campus.” The AstraZeneca property is split into a “north campus” and “south campus” by Powder Mill Road, with two bridges – one for pedestrians, the other for vehicles – connecting the two.

“The financial industry’s recent growth in our state has created thousands of good jobs for Delawareans and has played an important role in our state’s employment growth outpacing the national average,” Gov. Jack Markell said in a statement. “JP Morgan Chase has been a big part of that growth. Its purchase of the south campus will ensure that this centrally-located property can continue to be an engine for economic growth and opportunity in our region.”

AstraZeneca also sold a nearby high-rise formerly known as the Rollins Building to a firm run by the founder of Allied Bank. The Nemours Foundation recently started moving in to the building as a tenant in what has been renamed the Allied Bank Center.

“The financial industry’s recent growth in our state has created thousands of good jobs for Delawareans and has played an important role in our state’s employment growth outpacing the national average,” Gov. Jack Markell said in a statement. “JP Morgan Chase has been a big part of that growth. Its purchase of the south campus will ensure that this centrally-located property can continue to be an engine for economic growth and opportunity in our region.”

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Task Force Pitches Proposal To Cut Workers’ Comp Costs

[Wilmington \(DE\) News Journal](#), May 15, 2014

Businesses could cut costs for workers’ compensation insurance by a third under a proposal released Wednesday by a panel led by Lt. Gov. Matt Denn.

The changes recommended by the Workers’ Compensation Task Force ask lawmakers to rein in premiums that businesses pay for the insurance. Denn and other state officials have argued that rate increases have spiraled out of control in recent years.

One proposal caps what Delaware’s health providers can charge for treating job injuries and adopting a new fee schedule for services. The group, which includes lawmakers, labor and business leaders and health-care representatives, also recommended creating a new panel to help increase oversight of insurance carriers. Another proposal would consider replacing the representative for insurance carriers that participates in premium-setting negotiations with state regulators.

“If these changes are approved by the General Assembly and the governor, they will easily be the largest savings and medical costs of any type in the recent history of our state,” said Denn, the task force’s chairman. “It’s our hope and our expectation that reforms of this magnitude will result in a real cut

in workers' compensation premiums. That is something our business community wants and that our business community deserves."

The changes, approved by the task force on a 19 to one vote, will be offered as legislation in June. One of two representatives of the Medical Society of Delaware on the task force voted against the recommendations because the panel rejected higher reimbursement rates for hospitals and stand-alone surgical centers that were built into the formula to bring medical costs down by 33 percent.

Task-force members determined that nearly 70 percent of a businesses' workers comp bill is associated with medical costs. The Health Care Advisory Panel created a new medical fee schedule based on Medicare costs for individual procedures and caps the maximum reimbursement for any workers' compensation treatment, except radiology and surgery, at no more than 200 percent of the Medicare reimbursement. Radiology procedures would be no more than 250 percent, and the maximum compensation for surgery would not exceed 300 percent.

The current fee schedule is not uniformly set across the board, Denn said.

The state's medical society said in a release that it supports the fee schedule, recognizing that "immediate action is needed to reign in" workers' compensation costs in the state. But the group cautioned that the cap should not be seen as the sole solution to the state's workers compensation problems.

"Setting caps on physician and hospital reimbursements represents, at best, a short-term remedy, as the underlying systemic issues have not been adequately identified or addressed by the Task Force," the release said. "We urge the task force to take a more measured, comprehensive approach to workers' compensation reform to assure the ongoing quality and access to care for our state's injured workers."

Representatives from labor groups and the state chamber of commerce who served on the task force praised the ideas.

"I know we have something that will reduce rates, but I know we will have to be back again," said Rich Heffron, president of the Delaware State Chamber of Commerce.

Associated Press Reporter Randall Chase contributed to this story. Contact Jon Offredo at (302) 678-4271 or at joffredo@delawareonline.com or on Twitter @jonoffredo.

Fast-food Workers Demand Higher Wages

[Wilmington \(DE\) News Journal](#), May 15, 2014

Dozens of fast-food workers in the Wilmington area left their jobs Thursday to take part in protests calling for an increase in the national minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour.

The protests, which occurred at the McDonald's at 700 W. Fourth St. and the Peter Spencer Plaza across from the city/county building, contributed to a nationwide call among minimum wage earners to increase their pay to \$15 per hour.

Similar protests occurred in more than 100 cities nationwide, according to the groups who organized the Wilmington events.

"This should have been done a long time ago," said Patrick Adzadu, who's with the Delaware Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers.

"America can't go hungry. Nobody wants to be on food stamps. We can't be working for people and not be able to feed ourselves."

Related: More Delaware children living in poverty

Adzadu said his group deals with minimum wage workers on a daily basis and helps them find food, housing and other needs.

While studying at Cheyney University in Pennsylvania in 2001, he worked at Burger King earning \$7.25, an amount he said is too low given the increase in costs and services.

"If they're still getting that, it's not fair," he said. "Even if they raise it to more than what it is now, it's a start. We're not specifically saying it has to be \$15. If they do \$10, then maybe raise it to \$11, \$12, maybe it's enough."

Business groups and small-business owners have argued that raising the state's minimum wage could cost jobs and damage the state's still-sluggish economic recovery.

Business lobbyists have said that the increased costs would come on top of higher workers' compensation rates, higher federal taxes to replenish the unemployment trust fund and the costs of complying with President Barack Obama's health care law.

They also worry that higher-wage earners would demand raises if lawmakers raise the minimum wage.

The workers who protested in Wilmington on Thursday came from at least a dozen fast-food restaurants, including Kentucky Friend Chicken, McDonald's and Wendy's, according to an official with the regional 32BJ Services Employee International Union, one of the groups that organized the protests.

Poll: Should the minimum wage be raised?

Locally, Philadelphia and New Castle County have each taken steps to boost the minimum wage for some workers. Beginning July 1, New Castle County employees who earn minimum wage will begin earning \$10.10 an hour, up from \$7.25 an hour.

Philadelphia voters on May 20 will decide on whether to they want to allow airport workers and subcontracted workers who receive taxpayer money to earn at least \$10.88 an hour.

In January, Gov. Jack Markell signed into law a minimum wage increase for the state. The wage will increase by 50 cents, to \$7.75, on June 1. It will jump to \$8.25 on June 1, 2015.

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Kullman Argues For Ethanol Requirements

[Wilmington \(DE\) News Journal](#), May 15, 2014

DuPont CEO Ellen Kullman told an industry conference on Tuesday how important it is to renew the Renewable Fuel Standard, which helps the company sell its ethanol products.

Ethanol is made from corn, but DuPont has been working to produce and promote a next-generation biofuel, cellulosic ethanol, which is made from corn stover, or the leaves and stalks left over after the corn is harvested.

DuPont hopes to finish its \$225 million Iowa plant by the third quarter of this year. It will make 30 million gallons per year, to help satisfy federal mandates for ethanol blending into gasoline.

In 2007, the EPA set a goal of 36 billion gallons of ethanol planned to be blended into gasoline by 2022. This year, that number was scheduled to be 18.15 billion gallons, including an increasing amount of cellulosic ethanol. The EPA is reconsidering this amount.

Kullman gave a keynote speech at the 11th Annual World Congress on Industrial Biotechnology.

"Legislative and regulatory uncertainty has a direct impact on the growth of this industry," Kullman said. "If the EPA issues an RFS rule with increasing biofuels volumes, supporting a stable regulatory environment, our industry can thrive."

“So let me state clearly: the Renewable Fuel Standard works and Congress and the administration need to ensure its stability. This will bring a reduced reliance on fossil fuels, increased energy security, many more rural jobs and much needed environmental benefits.”

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL EDITORIALS

Sussex County Needs Leadership, Not Jokes About Race

[Wilmington \(DE\) News Journal](#), May 15, 2014

Sussex County Council members have a rather odd way of starting a conversation.

It is one thing to disagree with a group's actions, its goals or even its members. It is something completely different to make a fuss about an organization's name, especially an organization that has been around for more than 105 years and has been involved in some of the most important civil rights battles in American history.

Sussex County Councilman Sam Wilson managed to do just with the dismissal of the Lower Sussex Branch NAACP Youth Council's request for a small grant.

“What's NAACP stand for?” he asked in the middle of a council meeting.

A polite “no thank you” to the grant request would have sufficed. Instead Mr. Wilson chose to touch on some racial hot buttons, dwelling on the term “colored people” in the group's title and then later elaborating on an imaginary group for the advancement of white people and what a hard time it would have in today's world.

All of this was done in a mock innocent style so that any criticism of his comments could be dismissed as reverse racism. Of course, the NAACP was forced to explain its name and membership while Mr. Wilson's intended audience got to chuckle at his daring wit.

It is a way of starting up an argument and slipping out before the fighting starts.

Of course, if there really wasn't a wink-and-a-nod tone to his question “What's the NAACP stand for?” then Mr. Wilson displayed an appalling ignorance of American, Delaware and Sussex County history.

On the other hand, if he wanted to start a genuine discussion of racial relations in Sussex County today, why wasn't he more straightforward? Why didn't he actually engage people who see our society differently than he does? Why couldn't he enter into a genuine give-and-take conversation with people who are his constituents?

Why didn't he ask a question and wait for an answer instead of wiggling away?

Instead, he left the job of explaining and defending to others.

We are on the eve of the 60th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the famous school desegregation cases that involved Delaware.

As a society and a state, we have made progress. Yet racial disparities persist. Our economic system is undergoing such tremendous stress and change that many Americans are worried about social mobility and inequality, all of which exacerbate those racial tensions.

Now is a good time for a genuine conversation about our differences. Now is a time for a discussion of solutions, whether from the right or the left.

Now is a time for elected officials willing to lead, not just wisecrack.

Sixty Years After Brown And Still A Long Way To Go

[Wilmington \(DE\) News Journal](#), May 15, 2014

Saturday marks the 60th anniversary of the Brown v. Board of Education decision. Delaware was included in the Brown decision. It was one of the states, mostly from the deep South, that mandated racial segregation in its public schools, i.e., de jure segregation. In the infamous decision, Plessy v. Ferguson, the U.S. Supreme Court had upheld de jure segregation if the separate facilities were “equal.”

The 1954 Brown decision declared de jure segregation unconstitutional. In the second Brown decision, in 1955, which focused on the remedy for de jure segregation, the Supreme Court ordered the affected states to desegregate their public schools “with all deliberate speed.” Delaware, like many other states, focused on the deliberate more than the speed part of the order.

In 1971, black parents in Wilmington, joined later by the Wilmington School Board, renewed a lawsuit filed in the mid-1950s to implement the promise of Brown, arguing the Wilmington schools had never been desegregated despite Brown and Court rulings. After years of contentious litigation, the Wilmington plaintiffs prevailed against the suburban New Castle County school districts and the state of Delaware. The Courts ruled the city schools were indeed segregated as a result of state action.

COLUMN: Delaware’s role in desegregation

COLUMN: Teaching young people about Brown v. Board’s legacy

A single northern New Castle County school district was formed and the District Court ordered busing across city-suburban lines. In 1981, the single district was divided into the four northern New Castle County districts that exist today. By the end of the 1980s, Delaware was considered a national model for desegregated schools, and, later, Delaware was cited as one of the two states having the most desegregated public schools in the nation.

In 1995, after a series of Supreme Court decisions weakening the requirements for districts to be declared “unitary” and thus no longer required to implement components of a school desegregation remedy, the four districts and state convinced the Court to declare the districts unitary. With the passage of the Neighborhood Schools Act in April 2000, the districts had to assign students to the nearest neighborhood school or justify a deviation from this requirement based on hardship. Critics of the law vigorously argued segregated schools would be the inevitable consequence. Experience shows the critics were right.

In 2014, 60 years after the first Brown decision, many things have changed in northern New Castle County’s public schools, but school segregation has returned to Wilmington. As backdrop, the demographics of the public schools have changed. The white percentage across all public schools, including charters, is 43.4 percent in the county while the African-American percentage is 35 percent, Latino/Hispanic 15 percent, and Asian 4.6 percent. White students are a bare majority in Brandywine and about 45 percent in Red Clay and only about one-third of the students in Colonial and Christina.

Outside of Wilmington, more integrated housing patterns and continued busing of middle- and high-school students into suburban schools has supported desegregation. African-American superintendents, principals and teachers are found in suburban as well as city schools.

However, the city’s schools – both charters and traditional schools – especially at the elementary level, have become segregated again, with overwhelming majorities of minority and low-income children. For example, Christina’s four city elementary schools have 63 white students among almost 1,500 students. In the four inner-city charters, only 7 white students were counted in the 2012-13 school year out of over 1,500 students.

The causes of school segregation are complex. Housing segregation, more based on economics than race, plays a role, keeping many minorities in the city. Charters and choice have given both blacks and whites options that have increased segregation. Moreover, many people and organizations are concerned that limits on who can attend certain charter schools affect individual choice and accelerates segregation by race and class.

Should we care that school segregation has returned, at least in Wilmington, especially if some of this is by individual choice rather than by overtly racist laws? We believe we should. Success in our society increasingly will be for those who can participate in a multicultural environment. Research has shown that teachers prefer to work in schools that are not segregated by race, economic status or limited in student academic achievement. No, an African-American student does not need to sit next to a white student to learn, but desegregated schools by race and class tend to ensure higher academic success for all students in attendance.

Many have now recognized that the United States will need all its citizens to succeed in school to remain a prosperous democracy in the decades ahead. Most significantly, Brown was as much about ending America's Jim Crow – a system which stigmatized and demeaned one race – as it was about improving educational opportunity for African-Americans. The Brown decision was not the end, but the beginning, of our challenge.

Jeff Raffel, Helen Foss and Joseph Rosenthal were all involved in the desegregation effort in New Castle County dating back to the early 1970s. They are also current or former board members of the American Civil Liberties Union of Delaware, which continues to work to fulfill the promise of Brown.