

ASYLUM SEEKERS, FAMILY SEPARATION, DENATURALIZATION, and IMMIGRATION

<https://www.splcenter.org/presscenter/eleventh-circuit-rules-federal-anti-trafficking-law-can-apply-private-immigrant>

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) prohibits forced or coerced labor. CoreCivic and other private companies whose facilities hold detained asylum-seekers often require labor from detainees (“compensated” at ridiculously low rates) to pay for essentials like food and hygiene products. A group of immigrants’ rights organizations—including Project South and the Southern Poverty Law Center—are suing CoreCivic in federal court arguing that the TVPA should apply to those in immigration detention. CoreCivic, of course, has filed a motion to dismiss this complaint, which has been rejected twice, most recently by the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta. (Write-up 3/6/2020)

CONTACT your Congressmembers to point out that CoreCivic is likely violating the TVPA and **ASK** what action they’re taking

- **Find your Senators here:**

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1fWPKEeiBUwv0vaiTGYGKO37TWU4aSULWvI5sgOo5YS4/edit>

- **Find your Representative here:**

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tNhdclcADPMfFL2c1V6iF_NDxATh0A_WLxzMt2Tlwm0/edit

<https://www.warren.senate.gov/oversight/letters/senators-warren-merkley-and-harris-raise-concerns-that-dhs-operated-tent-courts-violate-asylum-seekers-due-process-rights>

<https://www.pri.org/stories/2020-03-02/lawyers-struggle-remotely-represent-asylum-seekers-remain-mexico-program>

Immigration Attorneys are being forced to work with asylum seekers in detention remotely, relying on phone calls. Often the first time an attorney can see her asylum client is when the asylum-seeker’s claim is heard before a judge—and then, attorney and client aren’t seeing each other in person: they’re seeing each other via video and may be separated by hundreds or thousands of miles. United States Senators Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.), Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.), and Kamala D. Harris (D-Calif.) sent a letter to the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) raising concerns about the lack of access to appropriate legal services and lack of transparency at DHS-operated “tent courts” at the U.S.-Mexico border. The lawmakers suggest these conditions violate asylum seekers’ due process rights and hinder critical oversight of those courts. (Write-up 3/6/2020)

JOIN Warren, Markley, and Harris in speaking out on this due process issue

- **William P. Barr**, Attorney General, U.S. Department of Justice, 950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20530-0001, (202) 353-1555

- **Chad F. Wolf**, Acting Secretary of Homeland Security, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 3801 Nebraska Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20528, (202) 282-8495

ASK your Congressmembers to contact Barr and Wolf with the same concerns

- **Find your Senators here:**

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1fWPKEeiBUwv0vaiTGYGKO37TWU4aSULWvI5sgOo5YS4/edit>

- **Find your Representative here:**

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tNhdclADPMfFL2c1V6iF_NDxATh0A_WLxzMt2TIwm0/edit

<https://www.npr.org/2020/02/13/805657208/senate-democrats-accuse-justice-department-of-politicizing-immigration-courts>

<https://www.themarshallproject.org/2019/08/28/is-it-time-to-remove-immigration-courts-from-presidential-control>

<https://twitter.com/AILANational/status/1229864528248295425>

The American Bar Association, American Immigration Lawyers Association, Federal Bar Association, and National Association of Immigration Judges are all calling for an independent immigration court, separate from the Department of Justice (DOJ). Our current system is biased and rushed, undermining due process. Pressures from within the DOJ undermine due processes. Immigration and asylum are matters of life and death and deserve serious, detailed consideration by a judiciary free from political pressures. (Write-up 3/2/2020)

JOIN these organizations in the call for an independent immigration court system

- **Find your Senators here:**

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1fWPKEeiBUwv0vaiTGYGKO37TWU4aSULWvI5sgOo5YS4/edit>

- **Find your Representative here:**

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tNhdclADPMfFL2c1V6iF_NDxATh0A_WLxzMt2TIwm0/edit

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/28/us/migrants-court-remain-in-mexico-mpp-injunction.html>

Via RLS at *News You May Have Missed*: On Friday, the 9th Circuit court found the government's "Remain in Mexico" policy to be illegal and said that asylum-seekers must be allowed into the United States to pursue their cases. Potential asylum-seekers living in filthy, freezing camps

across the border rejoiced and prepared to enter the U.S. Almost immediately, however, the court stayed its own ruling in order to give the government time to appeal and for the plaintiffs to respond, the *New York Times* reported. The administration's policy that asylum-seekers could not request asylum if they came into the United States illegally was also thrown out--and not stayed--by the 9th Circuit Court. (Write-up 3/2/2020)

DEMAND an end to the illegal "Remain in Mexico" policy

- **Alex Azar**, Secretary of Health and Human Services, 200 Independence Ave. SW, Washington DC 20201, (877) 696-6775

- **Chad Wolf**, Acting Secretary of Homeland Security, Washington DC 20528, (202) 282-8495
[no street address as per the DHS web site]

- **Find your Senators here:**

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1fWPKEeiBUwv0vaiTGYGKO37TWU4aSULWvI5sgOo5YS4/edit>

- **Find your Representative here:**

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tNhdelcADPMfFL2c1V6iF_NDxATh0A_WLxzMt2Tlwm0/edit

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/26/us/politics/denaturalization-immigrants-justice-department.html>

<https://www.aila.org/advo-media/issues/all/featured-issue-denaturalization-efforts-by-uscis>

Via RLS at *News You May Have Missed*: The Justice Department has established an office to pursue denaturalization of citizens, the *New York Times* reported, noting that "denaturalization case referrals to the department have increased 600 percent." Denaturalization had ordinarily been used when citizens lied on their applications or turned out to be criminals. Some immigration attorneys--including some within the Justice Department who were quoted anonymously--fear that denaturalization will be used more broadly to revoke the status of legitimate immigrants. Small errors or omissions on applications could be regarded as fraud. (Write-up 3/2/2020)

DENOUNCE this latest attempt to strip citizenship from honest Americans

- **William P. Barr**, Attorney General, U.S. Department of Justice, 950 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington DC 20530-0001, (202) 353-1555

- **Find your Senators here:**

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1fWPKEeiBUwv0vaiTGYGKO37TWU4aSULWvI5sgOo5YS4/edit>

- **Find your Representative here:**

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tNhdclADPMfFL2c1V6iF_NDxATh0A_WLxzMt2Tlwm0/edit

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/02/court-sides-trump-sanctuary-cities-grant-fight-200226161111923.html>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/10/us/politics/justice-department-sanctuary-law.html>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/14/us/Border-Patrol-ICE-Sanctuary-Cities.html>

<https://amp.wbur.org/news/2020/02/14/swat-like-immigration-officers-are-in-boston-ready-to-cooperate-with-ice-arrests>

Via RLS at *News You May Have Missed*: Last week we described the Trump administration's vendetta against sanctuary cities and states, which have refused to cooperate with the apprehension of immigrants by the Customs and Border Patrol. The CBP has sent in elite tactical units to sanctuary cities and sued a number of states, several of which have sued in return. New York City as well as the states of New York, Connecticut, New Jersey, Washington, Massachusetts, Virginia and Rhode Island sued the administration when it decided in 2017 to withhold grants unless the city and states agreed to give immigration authorities access to jails and let them know when an undocumented person was released from jail, reported *Al Jazeera*, drawing on an *AP* story. Now the 2nd US Circuit Court of Appeals has overruled a lower court decision that said the Trump administration had to release funding. (Write-up 3/2/2020)

OBJECT to this attack on states' rights and **DEMAND** Congressional action

- **Representative Nancy Pelosi** (D-CA), Speaker of the House, 1236 Longworth House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-496

- **Find your Senators here:**

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1fWPKEeiBUwv0vaiTGYGKO37TWU4aSULWvi5sgOo5YS4/edit>

- **Find your Representative here:**

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tNhdclADPMfFL2c1V6iF_NDxATh0A_WLxzMt2Tlwm0/edit

CONSUMER PROTECTIONS and WORKPLACE RIGHTS

<https://www.texarkanagazette.com/news/national/story/2020/feb/29/critics-airlines-proposed-would-make-regulation-harder/818761/>

<https://www.regulations.gov/document?D=DOT-OST-2019-0182-0016>

“Defining Unfair or Deceptive Practices, a Department of Transportation proposed rule change—a change proposed by the organization Airlines for America—would set new hurdles for fining airline or creating new rules to govern their practices. Under the change the Department of Transportation would first have to prove that and airline action or policy is “unfair” or “deceptive,” and airlines and other interested parties would be able to request a formal hearing before any fines or rules went into effect. As the *Texarkana Gazette* explains, *unfair* in this case means “causes or is likely to cause substantial injury which is not reasonably avoidable, and the harm is not outweighed by benefits to consumers or competition.” This raises the question of what the airline industry considers *substantial*, *reasonably avoidable*, and *benefits*. Deceptive would mean “likely to mislead a consumer acting reasonably under the circumstances with respect to a material issue,” with the legal definition of “material issue” meaning pretty much any disagreement between two parties. What kinds of policies and fines are we talking about? One example in the *Texarkana Gazette* is a 2009 requirement that airlines provide access to bathrooms, food, and water on already boarded delayed flights and that they allow passengers to disembark from a plane after three hours of sitting. The Republican administration has presented such rule changes as “streamlining” or “improving efficiency,” but adding legal hurdles for the Department of Transportation is not apt to make any process more smooth or efficient. Comments on this proposed rule change must be submitted by April 28. (Write-up 3/2/2020)

COMMENT on this proposal that will be a boon to airline profits and reduce consumer rights (Note: be sure to include Docket Number DOT-OST-2019-0182)

• **Docket Management Facility**, U.S. Department of Transportation, 1200 New Jersey Ave. SE, West Building Ground Floor, Room W12-140, Washington, DC 20590-0001 [You can submit online comments at <https://www.regulations.gov/document?D=DOT-OST-2019-0182-0016>]

<https://shelterforce.org/2020/01/30/affirmatively-dismantling-fair-housing/>

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/01/14/2020-00234/affirmatively-furthering-fair-housing>

The misleadingly titled “Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing Rule,” a proposed Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) rule change purports to require that jurisdictions receiving federal funds follow processes to ensure non-discrimination and work against segregation in housing. Despite that fact, the rule makes little mention of discrimination; it conflates “fair housing” and “affordable housing”; it removes the requirement for community participation and engagement on fair housing issues; it eliminates the requirement to analyze the local conditions that contribute to housing discrimination and segregation; and it threatens policies, such as those around rent stabilization policies and environmental protections, that can promote housing stability and safety. We could use affirmative furthering of the Fair Housing Rule, but this proposal falls short. Comments must be received by March 16. Hat-tip to Americans of Conscience Checklist. (Write-up 3/2/2020)

COMMENT on this proposed rule change, with your own housing stories, if appropriate [Note: *be sure to mention Docket Number FR 6123-P-02*]

• **Regulations Division**, Office of General Counsel, Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 7th Street SW, Room 10276, Washington, DC 20410-0500 [Or you can comment online at

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/01/14/2020-00234/affirmatively-furthering-fair-housing>]

<https://finance.yahoo.com/news/california-mini-cfpb-133209881.html>

In his recent budget, California Governor proposed creating a California Consumer Financial Bureau (CFPB). According to *Yahoo News*, Newsom called for “cement[ing] California’s consumer protection leadership amidst a retreat on that front by federal agencies including the [CFPB]... [in order] provide consumers greater protection from predatory practices.” Given the lack of consumer-oriented leadership at the U.S. CFPB, this seems like an excellent idea. One of the proposal’s developers is Richard Cordray, who served as the first director of the CFPB, explains that “This is a major, major initiative that will make a big difference, not only in California—certainly in California—but also nationally.” The California legislature has an opportunity to make a California CFPB reality as it works with Newsom’s proposed budget. (Write-up 3/2/2020)

EXPRESS your enthusiasm for a California CFPB, given federal abandonment of consumer financial protections

- Find your California Legislators here
<http://findyourrep.legislature.ca.gov/>

ENVIRONMENT

The Fish and Wildlife Service has proposed “Regulations Governing Take of Migratory Birds (Docket No. FWS-HQ-MB-2018-0090), a rule change to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) would allow injury or death of migratory birds that results from “incidental take”: what this means is that killing or injuring migratory birds would be fine, so long as killing or injuring those birds wasn’t your primary purpose. When might incidental take happen? During construction or demolition of buildings and roadways. During the use of pesticides. When birds strike power lines or communication towers. When birds are trapped in oilfield waste disposal pits. The proposed change would make the MBTA applicable only to deliberate poaching and hunting of migratory birds, legalizing many activities that will no doubt result in real harm to migratory species. A group of retired Department of the Interior (DOI) employees opposing this rule change has noted, “We know from our decades of on the job experience how the MBTA works

on the ground, and how critical it has been in protecting birds from unintended mortality events brought about human activities since the 1970s. The needless deaths of millions of birds have been prevented by this law.” Comments due by March 19. (Write-up 3/2/2020)

COMMENT to protect migratory birds by speaking out in opposition this rule change

• **Public Comments Processing**, Attn: FWS-HQ-MB-2018-0090; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; MS: JAO/1N; 5275 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA 22041-3803 [*You can also comment online at*

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/02/03/2020-01771/regulations-governing-take-of-migratory-birds>]

<https://www.revealnews.org/article/epa-scientists-found-a-toxic-chemical-damages-fetal-hearts-t-he-trump-white-house-rewrote-their-assessment/>

<https://www.regulations.gov/document?D=EPA-HQ-OPPT-2019-0500-0001>

“Trichloroethylene; Draft Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) Risk Evaluation and TSCA Science Advisory Committee on Chemicals (SACC) Meetings; Notice of Availability, Public Meetings, and Request for Comment” is quite a mouthful. What it boils down to is that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is asking for public comments on a proposed change in the risk evaluation of the widely-used toxin trichloroethylene (TCE). At least 15 scientific studies between 2000 and 2018 have shown relationships between TCE and cancer clusters and immune disorders. Even trace amounts of TCE have been demonstrated to cause severe fetal heart defects. In the past, based on this research and its own studies conducted in 2011 and 2016 the EPA has placed restrictions on the use of TCE. In 2016, shortly before Trump took office, the EPA began the process of completely banning certain common uses of TCE. Then, in 2017 when Scott Pruitt became EPA head for the new, Republican administration, he ordered this process halted and insisted that the risk assessment for TCE begin again from scratch. This created an opportunity for the chemical industry, who arranged for John DeSesso to present research challenging TCE’s demonstrated effect on fetal heart development. De Sesso has held occasional academic posts, but primarily works as a contract scientist for the chemical industry—the TCE research he presented to the EPA was funded by the Hydrogenated Solvents Industry Alliance and the American Chemistry Council. The EPA noted a weakness in DeSesso’s study, which eliminated certain types of fetal heart defects from its results, and concluded that even trace exposure to TCE is unsafe. Now, the Center for Investigative Reporting’s *Reveal* has interviewed two government scientists who state that “EPA scientists were directed to substantially rewrite their evaluation by discarding the science on TCE’s role in fetal heart defects. The instructions, they said, came from the Executive Office of the President.” *Reveal*’s evidence includes a careful review of the changes made between the draft and final reports on the effects of TCE and comparison with changes made to similar reports between the draft and final stages. At question is what sort of health risk will be considered “baseline” for TCE, since the baseline risk is the one that determines levels above which the chemical cannot be used. The revised EPA report chose not to use fetal heart damage as its baseline, which would have severely limited the use of TCE, and instead chose TCE’s effect on immune disfunction as the baseline for the chemical. The level at which TCE affects immune functioning

is 500 times greater than the level at which it affects fetal heart development. As Reveal explains “the sidelining of the heart defects research could affect any EPA proposals to ban or limit TCE. It also potentially could erode any existing EPA recommendations based on the heart defect science, such as EPA guidance on TCE pollution cleanup at military bases and other Superfund sites.” Given all this, the baseline proposed in the new regulation has the potential to allow ongoing incidents of fetal heart damage, among other effects. Comments on this proposal are due by April 26. (Write-up 3/2/2020)

DEMAND that the baseline for TCE’s risk assessment be fetal heart damage, not damaged immune function [Note: be sure to refer to EPA-HQ-OPPT-2019-0500-0001]

• **OPPT Docket**, Environmental Protection Agency Docket Center (EPA/DC), (28221T), 1200 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20460-0001, [You can also comment electronically at <https://www.regulations.gov/document?D=EPA-HQ-OPPT-2019-0500-0001>]

<https://energynews.us/2019/08/21/southeast/in-north-carolina-novel-legal-maneuver-deployed-against-atlantic-coast-pipeline/>

https://1bps6437gg8c169i0y1drtgz-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/2.20.2020-letter-to-Cooper-ACP_FINALVERSION.pdf

The *Americans of Conscience Checklist* urges us to contact North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper to ask that he revoke a key certificate and cancel the North Carolina leg of the Atlantic Coast pipeline that would transport fracked fuel through West Virginia, Virginia, and North Carolina. The pipeline would disproportionately harm low income, African American, and Indigenous communities (especially the Lumbee community in Robeson County, the largest community of Native Americans east of the Mississippi River), many of whom have been excluded from important decision-making processes. Living near pipelines and infrastructure (such as compressor stations) has been documented to cause a variety of health issues including skin, gastrointestinal, respiratory, neurological, and psychological problems. There are also grave concerns about maintaining historic tribal artifacts, and harm to wetlands, rivers, farmland, forests, and wildlife. (Write-up 3/2/2020)

ASK the Governor to do the right thing, for the residents of his state, particularly indigenous communities whose patrimonies will be put at risk by this project

• **Governor Roy Cooper**, 20301 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-0301, (919) 814-2000

ETHICS

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/immigration/2020/03/05/william-barr-certification-power/>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/05/us/politics/mueller-report-barr-judge-walton.html>

To the list of reasons to criticize the work of William Barr as U.S. Attorney General, we can add two more items.

-At the end of February, Barr issued a new definition of “torture” that will make it much more difficult for applicants to receive asylum on that ground. He can do this, explains the *Washington Post*, due to “a process known as ‘Certification,’ a historically little-used power of the attorney general that allows him to overrule decisions made by the Board of Immigration Appeals and set binding precedent.” While recent administrations have used certification relatively rarely (averaging between once every six months to once every two years), the Trump administration has used Certification at least twelve times in three years. The new definition of torture requires that “to constitute ‘torture under these regulations, an act must, among other things, ‘be specifically intended to inflict severe physical or mental pain or suffering....’ [that] “[T]orture’ does not cover ‘negligent acts’ or harm stemming from a lack of resources.” The asylum-seeker in this case was requesting asylum because upon his return to Mexico he would be committed to a Mexican mental health care facility whose poor conditions rise to the level of torture. An immigration judge had approved his application, but Barr has now reversed it.

-As part of a Freedom of Information suit asking for the public release of the unredacted Mueller report on Russian interferences and possible collusion with the Trump campaign in 2016, Federal Judge Reggie B. Walton (appointed by Republican George W. Bush) ruled that he would have to see the unredacted report in order to determine whether administration claims justifying the redactions are appropriate. According to the *New York Times* Judge Walton’s demand to see the full document was accompanied by references to Barr’s summary version of the Mueller report as “distorted,” “misleading,” and containing “inconsistencies. Her characterized Barr as having “a lack of candor” and challenged Barr’s “credibility and, in turn, the [Justice] department’s” assurances to the court that the redactions were necessary.

(Write-up 3/6/2020)

DEMAND Barr’s immediate resignation

- **William P. Barr**, Attorney General, U.S. Department of Justice, 950 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington DC 20530-0001, (202) 353-1555

ASK for a Congressional investigation into the issues raised by Judge Walton

- **Representative Nancy Pelosi** (D-CA), Speaker of the House, 1236 Longworth House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-496

- **Senator Mitch McConnell** (R-KY), Senate Majority Leader, 217 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-2541

- **Find your Senators here:**

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1fWPKEeiBUwv0vaiTGYGKO37TWU4aSULWvI5sgOo5YS4/edit>

- **Find your Representative here:**

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tNhdclADPMfFL2c1V6iF_NDxATh0A_WLxzMt2Tlwm0/e_dit

<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-03-05/california-officials-demand-changes-los-anges-voting-election-day-chaos>

Sometimes voter disenfranchisement is deliberate; sometimes it's the result of poor planning and inadequate equipment. But good public officials respond by protecting that franchise. Los Angeles County experienced a number of problems with the March 3 presidential primary vote. The county had multiple instances of voting machine failures and long waits to vote. In addition the contractor sending out mail ballots discovered a week before the election that it had failed to mail out 17,000 ballots. Los Angeles had just made a switch from local polling locations to larger regional "vote centers" and under California policy effective through 2024, should have sent a mail ballot to every voter in former polling districts, but received a legislative waiver of this obligation. California Secretary of State Alex Padilla has now issued an order that Los Angeles County must send mail ballots, in a timely fashion, to every resident for the November presidential election. (Write-up 3/6/2020)

THANK California Secretary of State Padilla for acting to ensure that Los Angeles County's voters will be able to exercise the franchise in November

•**Alex Padilla**, Secretary of State, 1500 11th St., Sacramento, CA 95814, (916) 653-6814

<https://www.govexec.com/workforce/2020/02/white-house-confirms-its-purging-disloyal-employees-bowels-federal-government/163316/>

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/03/politics/john-mcentee-white-house-litmus-test-questionnaire/index.html>

Government Executive reports that the White House has confirmed ongoing work to identify federal agency employees who are not sufficiently loyal to Trump. A White House spokesperson was reported as saying that they are trying to find individuals who have taken any action that undermines Trump. Many are voicing concerns that this process will violate civil service laws. As *Government Executive* points out, the "number of federal employees *proving* their agencies took *prohibited* personnel practices against them reached an all-time high in Trump's first year in office" [emphasis added]. According to *CNN*, the White House has also acknowledged adding Trump-related questions to a questionnaire required of applicants for administration positions. Those seeking career positions will not have to complete it. Applicants will now have to answer questions such as—

"What part of Candidate Trump's campaign message most appealed to you and why?"

"Have you ever appeared in the media to comment on Candidate Trump, President Trump or other personnel or policies of the Trump administration?" (Write-up 3/6/2020)

REMIND this administration and Congressmembers that the loyalty that matters most is to the Constitution, not any individual President, and **ASK** if Trump has forgotten that oath he took in January 2017

- **Donald Trump**, the White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington DC 20500, (202) 456-1111

- **Norbert Vint**, Acting Inspector General, Office of Personnel Management, 1900 E Street, N.W.; Room 6400, Washington, D.C. 20415, (202) 606-1200

- **Representative Nancy Pelosi** (D-CA), Speaker of the House, 1236 Longworth House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-496

- **Senator Mitch McConnell** (R-KY), Senate Majority Leader, 217 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-2541

- **Find your Senators here:**

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1fWPKEeiBUwv0vaiTGYGKO37TWU4aSULWvI5sgOo5YS4/edit>

- **Find your Representative here:**

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tNhdelcADPMfFL2c1V6iF_NDxATh0A_WLxzMt2Tlwm0/edit

https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/former-us-senators-the-senate-is-failing-to-perform-its-constitutional-duties/2020/02/25/b9bdd22a-5743-11ea-9000-f3cfee23036_story.html

In the *Washington Post*, a bipartisan group of former Senators has directed an open letter to the current U.S. Senate asserting that Congress is not fulfilling its Constitutional duties and that much of the responsibility for that lies with the Senate. They call for the formation of a bipartisan caucus committed to making the Senate “function as intended by the founding fathers intended.” The letter enumerates powers Congress has ceded to the executive branch, including regulation of international trade, the use of military force, and the power of the purse. The letter also cites changes in Senate practices, in particular, the practice of quickly resort to filibusters or the threat of filibusters to prevent action so that “Neither in committee nor on the floor do rank-and-file members have reasonable opportunities to advance their positions by voting on legislation.” Of particular interest is the fact that one-third of all signators to this document served in the Senate as Republicans or Independents, making it difficult to claim the letter “Democratic politicking.” (Write-up 3/6/2020)

JOIN these former Congressmembers and call for the return to a functional Senate

- **Senator Mitch McConnell** (R-KY), Senate Majority Leader, 217 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-2541

- **Find your Senators here:**

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1fWPKEeiBUwv0vaiTGYGKO37TWU4aSULWvi5sgOo5YS4/edit>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2020/02/27/judge-voids-nearly-1-million-acres-oil-gas-leases-saying-trump-policy-undercut-public-input/>

<https://www.wilderness.org/articles/press-release/blm-finalizes-major-rollbacks-sage-grouse-conservation-plans>

Via RLS at *News You May Have Missed*: A judge in Idaho has voided almost a million acres of oil and gas leases, saying that the way the Trump administration had limited public comment was “arbitrary and capricious,” according to the *Washington Post*. The Western Watersheds Project and the Center for Biological Diversity had brought the case to try to preserve habitat for the sage-grouse (among other species dependent on sage), whose population is declining precipitously. The *Post* cites many examples of how the administration has tried to shorten public comment periods or eliminate public comment entirely. Chase Huntley from The Wilderness Society’s climate and energy program, told the *Post* that “A centerpiece of this effort has been the administration’s efforts to silence the public and local communities.” (Write-up 3/2/2020)

REMIND administration figures and our Congressmembers how important public comment periods are and **DEMAND** that they be substantial and well-publicized

- **David Bernhardt**, Secretary of the Interior, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1849 C St. NW, Washington DC 20240, (202) 208-3100

- **William Perry Pendley**, Deputy Director, Policy and Programs, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1849 C St. NW, Washington DC 20240, (202) 208-3100

- **Find your Senators here:**

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1fWPKEeiBUwv0vaiTGYGKO37TWU4aSULWvi5sgOo5YS4/edit>

- **Find your Representative here:**

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tNhdelcADPMfFL2c1V6iF_NDxATh0A_WLxzMt2Tlwm0/edit

Here’s a thought for those of us saddened by Elizabeth Warren’s withdrawal from the Democratic primary race. Warren, Kristin Gillibrand, and Kamala Harris have not yet endorsed

any other candidate, and former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, who had endorsed Warren, has not yet announced a new endorsement. (Write-up 3/6/2020)

ASK all four of the to refuse to endorse any candidate until and unless there's a women on the ticket

- **Senator Elizabeth Warren**, 2400 JFK Federal Building, 15 New Sudbury St, Boston, MA 02203
- **Senator Kirsten Gillibrand**, Leo W. O'Brien Fed Office Building, 11A Clinton Avenue, Room 821, Albany, NY 12207
- **Senator Kamala Harris** (D-CA), 112 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-3553
- **Secretary Julián Castro**, 727 E. Cesar E. Chavez Blvd, Suite B-128, San Antonio, TX 78206

<https://georgiarecorder.com/2020/02/27/u-s-house-report-kemp-mocked-allegations-of-voter-suppression/>

The House Oversight and Reform Committee has just released a report, "Voter Suppression in Minority Communities; Learning from the Past to Protect Our Future." The report identifies current voter suppression tactics, such as North Carolina's reduction in early voting locations; the shortened (three days, instead of two weeks) open period for the early polling location at Texas State University; attempts by the Florida Secretary of State to prevent early voting being held on the campuses of public universities and colleges. The report also highlights the damage done by voter purges and restrictive voter ID laws. The report also provides detailed coverage of voter suppression tactics employed in the most recent Georgia Gubernatorial election, which was "won" by then-Secretary of State Brian Kemp, who engineered purges of voter rolls, blocking of new voter registration, and poll closures. While the contents of the report may be disheartening, Oversight and Reform has done valuable work shining a light on undercutting of our voting system. (Write-up 3/2/2020)

THANK the Committee for its work on this report

- **House Oversight and Reform Committee**, 2157 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-5051

GENERAL DECENCY

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/1/text>

From Representative Jimmy Panetta on Facebook: "This Thursday marks one year since House passage of the For the People Act (H.R. 1), the most sweeping package of anti-corruption and voting rights reforms since Watergate. This once-in-a-generation reform package would revitalize our democracy, advancing transformational changes across four major policy areas: voter access, election security, campaign finance and ethics reform. Every Senate Democrat

co-sponsored the legislative companion S. 949. We need Leader McConnell to act I'm going to keep fighting for H.R. 1 to protect our elections and our democracy.” In fact, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has not even assigned H.R.1 to a committee. (Write-up 3/6/2020)

DEMAND Senate consideration of H.R.1

• **Senator Mitch McConnell** (R-KY), Senate Majority Leader, 217 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510, (202) 224-2541

<https://www.bridgemi.com/michigan-health-watch/i-hate-complain-i-havent-had-water-year-detroit-story>

<https://www.michiganradio.org/post/whitmer-will-not-use-executive-powers-end-detroit-water-shutoffs>

<https://www.bridgemi.com/michigan-health-watch/coronavirus-fears-renew-calls-gov-whitmer-end-detroit-water-shutoffs>

Roughly 9,500 homes in Detroit remain without water after the city disconnected them for nonpayment last year. In 2019, Detroit saw 23,473 such shut-offs. For those who were able to have water restored, the average wait time as twenty-nine days. Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer could choose to use her executive privilege to end these shutoffs, which would appear to be the wise move, given the coronavirus situation and the hand washing cited as the first line of containment. Whitmer has declined to do this, but efforts are underway to urge her to reconsider. (Write-up 3/6/2020)

JOIN the voices asking Governor Whitmer to put an end to water shutoffs and to make safe, clean water affordable for all Michiganders

• **Governor Gretchen Whitmer**, P.O. Box 30013, Lansing, Michigan 48909, (517) 335-7858

HEALTH and HEALTHCARE

<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-03-05/california-demands-insurers-cover-cost-of-coronavirus-testing-and-screenings>

In California, where the novel Coronavirus has been declared a public health emergency, Governor Gavin Newsom and the state's Insurance Commissioner have issued a requirement

that insurers cover testing for the virus with no out of pocket costs for those insured. (Write-up 3/6/2020)

THANK Newsom and Lara for putting public health before private profits

- **Governor Gavin Newsom**, c/o State Capitol, Suite 1173, Sacramento, CA 95814, (916) 445-2841

- **Ricardo Lara**, Insurance Commissioner, 300 Capitol Mall, Suite 1700, Sacramento, CA 95814, (800) 967-9331

HUMAN and CIVIL RIGHTS

https://www.democracynow.org/2020/3/3/headlines/report_80_000_uyghur_muslims_forced_into_factory_labor_for_nike_apple

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/siminamistreanu/2020/03/02/study-links-nike-adidas-and-apple-to-forced-uyghur-labor/>

A study by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) has identified a total of eighty-three multinationals that have been linked to forced labor by Uighurs in factories across China. The report estimates that between 2017 and 2019 some 80,000 Uighurs, of the estimated 1.5 million ethnic minorities China is holding in internment camps, were assigned to perform forced labor for these companies. The exploitation of Uighur labor is just one aspect of a systematic effort by China to destroy Uighur culture and identity, as this Muslim ethnic minority is seen as a threat to Chinese homogeneity and security. Forbes reports that “[a]lthough state media are claiming Uighurs are being compensated for their work, the ASPI researchers found they live in segregated dormitories, are unable to go home, and they undergo Mandarin and ideological training outside working hours, similarly to Uighurs in the internment camps.” Companies identified as benefitting from Uighur forced labor include Nike, Adidas, Apple, Microsoft, Samsung, Fila, Puma, Bosch, and Panasonic. Most of these companies say that they have no knowledge of forced labor being used in the production of the items because they work through contractual relationships with labor suppliers. (Write-up 3/6/2020)

DEMAND that these companies determine whether their products are being made with forced labor, discontinue their relationship with labor suppliers where that is the case, and establish mechanisms by which they can continue to monitor who is making their products and under what conditions

- **John Donahoe**, President and Chief Executive Officer, Nike Corporate Headquarters, 1 Bowerman Dr., Beaverton, OR 97005, (503) 671-6453

- **Thomas Rabe**, Chairman, Adidas America, Inc., 5055 N. Greeley Ave., Portland, OR 97217, (800) 982-9337
- **Tim Cook**, Chief Executive Officer, Apple, 1 Apple Park Way, Cupertino, CA 95014, (408) 996-1010
- **Satya Nadella**, Chief Executive Office, Microsoft, 555 California St #200., San Francisco, CA 94104, (415) 972-6400
- **Young Hoon Eom**, President and Chief Executive Officer, Samsung America, 3655 N. 1st St., San Jose, CA 95134, (408) 544-4000
- **Jennifer Estabrook**, President, Fila North America, 930 Ridgebrook Rd., Suite 200, Sparks, MD 21152, (800) 845-3452
- **Bob Phillion**, President and CEO, Puma North America, 10 Lyberty Way, Westford, MA 01886, (978) 698-1000
- **Mike Mansuetti**, President, Bosch North America, 38000 Hills Tech Drive, Farmington Hills, Michigan 48331, (917) 421-7209
- **Tom Gebhardt**, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Panasonic North America, 6th Floor, Two Riverfront Plaza, Newark NJ 07102-5490, (877) 803-8492

<https://www.sentencingproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Facts-of-Life.pdf>

https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/assets/141027_iachr_racial_disparities_aclu_submission_0.pdf

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/10/22/rights-groups-urge-cosponsorship-second-look-act>

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/116/hr3795>

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/116/s2146>

The *Americans of Conscience Checklist* encourages use to contact our Congressmembers to ask that they cosponsor the Second Look Act (S.2146 in the Senate; H.R.3795 in the House). The U.S. has an inordinate number of nonviolent offenders serving life sentences, 80% of them people of color. Under the Second Look Act, federal judges would consider petitions for sentence reduction after individuals have served at least ten years, restoring people to communities and saving considerable resources. The Senate legislation, introduced by Cory Booker (D-NJ) currently has no cosponsors. The House legislation was introduced by Karen Bass (D-CA) and has only four cosponsors: Eleanor Norton (D-CO), Barbara Lee (D-CA), Ayanna Pressley (D-MA), and Lacy Clay (D-MO). (Write-up 3/2/2020)

URGE your Congressmembers to cosponsor the Second Look Act

• **Find your Senators here:**

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1fWPKEeiBUwv0vaiTGYGKO37TWU4aSULWvi5sgOo5YS4/edit>

- **Find your Representative here:**

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tNhdelcADPMfFL2c1V6iF_NDxAth0A_WLxzMt2Tlwm0/edit

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/2214/cosponsors?searchResultViewType=expanded&KWICView=false>

H.R.2214, the No Ban Act, would impose limitations on the President's authority to suspend or restrict aliens from entering the United States and terminate certain presidential actions implementing such restrictions. It would also prohibit religious discrimination in various immigration-related decisions, such as whether to issue an immigrant or non-immigrant visa, with certain exceptions. It has a large list of cosponsors. (Write-up 3/2/2020)

TELL the Speaker of the House that we support this legislation and want to see it come before the full House

- **Representative Nancy Pelosi** (D-CA), Speaker of the House, 1236 Longworth House Office Building, Washington DC 20515, (202) 225-496