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Here we are again with our weekly news update. We know that you are busy people, and you probably do have a lot of news to sift through, online, on social media, on news feeds. But we will bring you a weekly update of news we curate from major news sources that may be of interest to you. We may even be able to introduce you to some new news sources you will enjoy exploring.

So read these on your devices, or print them out for your morning coffee reading this weekend. (We do not expect you will read these all at once: this is slow news, not Facebook news. So explore, linger, and share with friends—we mean share the links with actual, physical, real friends!)

1. Scott Pruitt to California: "Learn not to breathe." No, that is not a headline in The Onion. It is the latest shocker in a string of proposed attacks on the Environmental Protection Agency itself, where the "Protection" part seems to be offensive to the administration. Scott Pruitt has proposed rolling back Obama-era rules for auto fuel economy standards and emissions in an attack on the air we breathe. "The Trump administration is expected to launch an effort in coming days to weaken greenhouse gas emissions and fuel economy standards for automobiles, handing a victory to car manufacturers and giving them ammunition to potentially roll back industry standards worldwide." So reports The New York Times on Thursday evening as the story broke. One small detail to be overcome: California. "The move — which undercuts one of President Barack Obama's signature efforts to fight climate change — would also propel the Trump administration toward a courtroom clash with California, which has vowed to stick with the stricter rules even if Washington rolls back federal standards." Is there another side to this story? Well, "a coalition of free-market groups including the Competitive Enterprise Institute urged Mr. Pruitt to take California on. 'It is time for the E.P.A. to act,' the groups said. If the agency did not act quickly, the groups said, 'people across the state of California will be facing unrealistic and costly mandates which threaten their basic right to choose.'" Californians, as we know, are anxious for that chance to give up their basic right to breathe. Read the details here: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/29/climate/epa-cafe-auto-pollution-rollback.html>.

2. You may have heard that Christopher Steele, author of the infamous Trump dossier, is a Hillary agent working for the Deep State. So goes the Fox / Nunes narrative. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. Steele was hired by a subcontractor, and he did not even know at first that the original project, to dig up opposition research on Trump, had been paid for by a Republican anti-Trump millionaire. The project was then turned over to a law firm working for Hillary. The FBI, that deep state, did not initiate the dossier; in fact they did not even report it up the line for months. It was Steele himself who prodded first the FBI, then a friend at the State Department, to report it more broadly to the government. This and more is detailed in an excellent long-form essay in The New Yorker magazine by their investigative reporter Jane Mayer, in the March 12 issue.

What Steele had found alarmed him enough to contact the FBI, and what he heard from his Russian sources (whom the FBI later said they considered basically trustworthy) had revealed startling reports of Russian contacts with Trump and interference in the presidential campaign. "More significant, in hindsight, than the sexual details were claims that the Kremlin and Trump were politically colluding in the 2016 campaign. The Russians were described as having

cultivated Trump and traded favors with him 'for at least 5 years.' Putin was described as backing Trump in order to 'sow discord and disunity both within the U.S.' and within the transatlantic alliance. The report claimed that, although Trump had not signed any [Moscow] real-estate-development deals, he and his top associates had repeatedly accepted intelligence from the Kremlin on Hillary Clinton and other political rivals. The allegations were astounding—and improbable. They could constitute treason even if they were only partly true.”

Steele contacted friends in both the FBI and the State Department. He felt a duty to do so. But, “[f]or all the Republicans’ talk of a top-down Democratic plot, Steele and [founder of Steele employer GPS, Glen] Simpson appear never to have told their ultimate client—the Clinton campaign’s law firm—that Steele had gone to the F.B.I.” But Steele became anxious that the FBI did not appear to have alerted either the president, the public, or the government. He went to a friend at State, who passed a summary to John Kerry. Kerry, when he found that the FBI did know about this, did nothing. “The so-called Deep State, it seems, hardly jumped into action against Trump. ‘No one wanted to touch it,’ [the State Department’s Jonathan] Winer said. Obama Administration officials were mindful of the Hatch Act, which forbids government employees to use their positions to influence political elections. The State Department officials didn’t know who was funding Steele’s research, but they could see how politically explosive it was. So they backed away.”

But, as for Steele, “[he] believed that the Russians were engaged in the biggest electoral crime in U.S. history, and wondered why the F.B.I. and the State Department didn’t seem to be taking the threat seriously. Likening it to the attack on Pearl Harbor, he felt that President Obama needed to make a speech to alert the country. He also thought that Obama should privately warn Putin that unless he stopped meddling the U.S. would retaliate with a cyberattack so devastating it would shut Russia down.” Eventually, Steele met secretly with the press, and the story got out. Obama had been aware from CIA intelligence (before the White House knew about the Steele report) that Russia was suspected of election meddling, but no one in the White House knew how to handle this information. In September, Obama asked a bipartisan group of legislators involved in national security—the “Gang of Eight”—to sign a statement condemning Russia. “But one Gang of Eight member, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, expressed skepticism about the Russians’ role, and refused to sign a bipartisan statement condemning Russia. After that, Obama, instead of issuing a statement himself, said nothing.” It was not until January, just weeks before the Inauguration, that Obama (and incoming president Trump) learned of the Steele dossier. Steele has met with Robert Mueller, for hours, but we do not know the outcome. The rest, as they say, is (our ongoing) history. [emphasis added]

This will be the most comprehensive current account of the Steele dossier and its history you will read. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/03/12/christopher-steele-the-man-behind-the-trump-dossier>. \*Highly recommended reading.

A note: Trump defenders do claim that Steele received information from the Clinton campaign’s Sidney Blumenthal and passed it to the FBI. See Brietbart: <http://www.breitbart.com/big-government/2018/02/09/former-state-dept-official-i-fed-oppo-research-from-sidney-blumenthal-to-christopher-steele/>.

Jonathan Winer has claimed that he was initially unaware that Steele had passed on the Clinton campaign’s own report to the FBI (which came from a Clinton friend and journalist, Cody Shearer). He also says he cannot judge the veracity of either the Clinton report or Steele’s: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/devin-nunes-is-investigating-me-heres-the-truth/>

[2018/02/08/cc621170-0cf4-11e8-8b0d-891602206fb7\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/2018/02/08/cc621170-0cf4-11e8-8b0d-891602206fb7_story.html). It is clear from Mayer's report, it should be said, that Steele was specifically asked, in October, for anything he had on Trump. He complied but did add that he did not vouch for the Shearer memo (which is separate from his dossier).

3. On Wednesday, The Washington Post reported that "The FBI has found that a business associate of former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort had ongoing ties to Russian intelligence, including during the 2016 campaign when Manafort and his deputy, Rick Gates, were in touch with the associate, according to new court filings." [emphasis added] [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/manafort-associate-had-russian-intelligence-ties-during-2016-campaign-prosecutors-say/2018/03/28/473228e8-3231-11e8-8bdd-cdb33a5eef83\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/manafort-associate-had-russian-intelligence-ties-during-2016-campaign-prosecutors-say/2018/03/28/473228e8-3231-11e8-8bdd-cdb33a5eef83_story.html).

As The Post's Greg Sargent points out, "That means Mueller is now alleging that Trump's deputy campaign manager [Rick Gates] knew in the fall of 2016 that his and Manafort's business associate had ties to Russian intelligence. What's more, The Post adds, [based on previous reporting](#), that Manafort has said he and the associate discussed in August 2016 the 'hacking of Democratic National Committee emails.' One month previously, WikiLeaks — widely believed to be a Russian cut-out operation — had released stolen DNC emails." This is the first time Manafort and Gates have been tied to a Russian intelligence operative, but Sargent does warn that we can't draw conclusions yet about what the links were or what legal liability will flow from this. It is certain, though, that this new filing is meant to increase pressure on Manafort and Gates. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/plum-line/wp/2018/03/28/another-shoe-just-dropped-in-the-mueller-probe/>.

Politico reported on Monday on the growing pressure on Rick Gates, who has already cut a plea deal with Mueller's prosecutors. What is he telling them about the campaign's ties to Russia? "Though it is a virtual given that Gates will sell out his business partner and Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort, less understood is the direct threat Gates could pose to President Donald Trump." Politico tries to answer this question by consulting a range of legal specialists. "Gates would have been privy to a wide range of Manafort's activities, potentially including the now-famous June 2016 Trump Tower meeting Manafort attended — along with Kushner and Trump Jr. — with a Russian lawyer who promised dirt on Hillary Clinton." But how far his testimony would pose a danger to Trump is disputed. <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/03/26/rick-gates-mueller-trump-484739>.

4. Make no mistake: the firing of Veterans Affairs Secretary David J. Shulkin was no ordinary cabinet reshuffle. It is part of a right-wing agenda to privatize the VA. Shulkin writes an impassioned op-ed in Thursday's New York Times. He says, "Unfortunately, the department has become entangled in a brutal power struggle, with some political appointees choosing to promote their agendas instead of what's best for veterans. These individuals, who seek to privatize veteran health care as an alternative to government-run V.A. care, unfortunately fail to engage in realistic plans regarding who will care for the more than 9 million veterans who rely on the department for life-sustaining care.... [P]rivatization leading to the dismantling of the department's extensive health care system is a terrible idea." <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/28/opinion/shulkin-veterans-affairs-privatization.html>.

The New York Times reported Wednesday night that "in recent months, a group of conservative Trump administration appointees at the White House and the department [began to break with the secretary and plot his ouster](#). At issue was how far and how fast to privatize health care for veterans, a long-sought goal for conservatives like the Koch brothers." <https://>

[www.nytimes.com/2018/03/28/us/politics/david-shulkin-veterans-affairs-trump.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/28/us/politics/david-shulkin-veterans-affairs-trump.html).

5. The media widely and generally sympathetically reported on the student marches against gun violence. It would be hard to reference a single good print source (and indeed many TV stations, and national NPR, did good live coverage of the Saturday event). But perhaps the best overall coverage has come from the UK's The Guardian (as it generally has on the gun issue). That paper had "[s]tudents from [the Eagle Eye](#), Marjory Stoneman Douglas high school's news magazine, guest edit [their] US edition." The result was a moving series of articles. Their lead piece says, "[s]tudents from Marjory Stoneman Douglas high school accused the National Rifle Association on Sunday of exploiting people's fears to sell weapons and criticized the Trump administration for its stuttering response to last month's gun rampage in Florida, which left 14 of their peers and three teachers dead." Another student said, "Since the shooting that killed 14 students and three staff members at our school in Parkland, Florida, on 14 February, my classmates and I have been working relentlessly, day and night, to make sure our voices get heard .... [a]nd it is not for our own benefit – it is for the benefit of the men, women, and children that we hope to save when our rhetoric and hard work comes to fruition in the halls of Congress. I've seen first-hand the toll it has taken on all of us, and the extraordinary amount of work required for it to happen. We are exhausted but we feel empowered, too." Read the series of articles here: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/series/parkland-student-takeover>.

You may not wish to read about it, but just to illustrate the quality of thought of one opponent of the student action, Rick Santorum offered his own incisive solution to the problem of school gun shootings; teach the kids CPR [!]. Just to prove we are not making this up, here is the lead from The Washington Post on Monday: "Doctors and surgeons had an important message for former Republican senator Rick Santorum on Sunday: CPR does not save people who are bleeding to death from AR-15 wounds. The news flash directed at Santorum came after he suggested [live on CNN](#) that learning CPR was a better way for young people to take action in response to a mass shooting, rather than protesting gun violence and asking 'someone else to solve their problem' by passing a 'phony gun law.'" [emphasis added] Perhaps our readers may wish to stop here. But here is the link, in case you do think we are making this up: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2018/03/26/doctors-assure-rick-santorum-learning-cpr-wont-save-mass-shooting-victims/>.

6. The media is rocked back and forth by the winds of Stormy. There is considerable debate over whether the Stormy Daniels contract is actually enforceable, but many legal analysts believe it is. The real question is whether it can be proved that the contract constituted an illegal campaign contribution. This is more important, of course, than whether Trump is lying about an affair. What are the legal implications? For a good summary of the issues here, see The Washington Post's roundup by Philip Bump on Monday, "There are now multiple legal questions surrounding attempts to hide alleged Trump relationships." Bump concludes, "If the Daniels payment was intended to prevent her from telling a story that would harm the campaign, we were told by the Campaign Legal Center's Lawrence Noble, Cohen was, at best, making an illegal campaign contribution. That Cohen used assets from the Trump Organization (his email address; his office) to secure the deal was probably [a violation](#) of a prohibition against using corporate resources to make contributions to a candidate. This all hinges on whether the payment to Daniels was meant to affect the election, which, barring physical evidence or an admission, is trickier to prove than it may seem." But the case of the Playboy model, Karen McDougal, may be the stronger, since it does seem as if the Trump attorney, Michael Cohen, contacted lawyers for National Enquirer's parent's CEO and friend of Donald Trump, David Pecker (not an alias!) and may have coordinated with the Trump campaign. This is murky stuff,

but it could spell trouble for the president. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/politics/wp/2018/03/26/there-are-now-multiple-legal-questions-surrounding-attempts-to-hide-alleged-trump-relationships/>.

Bump had earlier examined the legal liability for Trump, and in an update to that piece on Sunday evening, after the Daniels CBS interview, he reaches some new conclusions. Legal experts Bump consults find that much hinges on how strongly one can argue that the money paid to Daniels was intended to come from the campaign and also to help Trump. It may be a hard thing to prove beyond a reasonable doubt. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/politics/wp/2018/03/09/new-evidence-the-stormy-daniels-payment-may-have-violated-election-law/>.

But our favorite headline in all the media coverage of the affair must be Michelle Goldberg's in The New York Times on Monday: "Stormy Daniels Spanks Trump Again." Goldberg leads with, "Because there is broad consensus that Donald Trump is a lewd degenerate, nothing Stormy Daniels, the pornographic film actress and director, told '60 Minutes' about their alleged 2006 sexual encounter was particularly astonishing. (Though the mental image of Trump dropping his pants at Daniels's command for a spanking will likely dampen libidos throughout the land.) Everyone knows Trump is a disloyal husband, so it's no shock that he slept with Daniels — and, at about the same time, with the former Playboy model Karen McDougal — while his wife, Melania Trump, was caring for their new baby...." But what was new in the CBS interview, Goldberg says, was the credible claim of intimidation and physical threat to Daniels. Moreover, "More significant ... is Avenatti's claim that the original hush agreement is invalid in part because it 'was entered with the illegal aim, design and purpose of circumventing federal campaign finance law.'" Goldberg concludes, of Avenatti's new strategy, "I don't want to get my hopes up about a porn star saving the republic. But I can scarcely think of a more satisfying way for this terrible era to end." <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/26/opinion/stormy-daniels-trump-60-minutes.html> [emphasis added].

For those who missed it, here is the full transcript of the CBS "60 Minutes" Daniels interview with Anderson Cooper. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/stormy-daniels-describes-her-alleged-affair-with-donald-trump-60-minutes-interview/>.

7. Conservative columnist Max Boot pushes back against the whole Daniels storm: "I just don't care what these women have to say about their alleged flings with President Trump," he says in a column headlined, "Stormy Daniels is a sideshow. Let's focus on the real Trump scandals." In the Tuesday Washington Post, he remarks that focusing on sex scandals is a distraction: "Let's talk about the alleged collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia-linked figures.... Let's talk about Trump's assault on the rule of law.... Let's talk about Trump's unwillingness to divest himself of his business holdings or to release his tax returns.... Let's talk about his son-in-law Jared Kushner's failure to win a top-level security clearance after reports about his conflicts of interest.... Let's talk about the president's pathological dishonesty." Boot has changed his mind on the Iraq war and wrote a scathing attack on John Bolton, whom he supported many years ago. He considers himself a conservative harsh Trump critic. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/global-opinions/wp/2018/03/27/stormy-daniels-is-a-sideshow-lets-focus-on-the-real-trump-scandals/>.

8. On Wednesday evening, The New York Times reported that "a lawsuit accusing President Trump of violating the Constitution by refusing to divorce himself from his businesses cleared a critical hurdle Wednesday when a federal judge in Maryland refused the Justice Department's plea to dismiss it.... The suit, filed by Washington, D.C., and the State of Maryland, accuses Mr.

Trump of violating constitutional anticorruption clauses intended to limit his receipt of government-bestowed benefits, or emoluments.” There is little legal precedent for suits based on the emoluments clause, so this case, which will add to Trump’s legal troubles, will very likely be appealed and decided by higher courts. Buy this is an interesting development in an ongoing challenge to the Trump organization’s alleged profiting from the president’s position. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/28/us/trump-emoluments-lawsuit.html>.

9. An important article by conservative / libertarian essayist Andrew Sullivan is designed to scare you. A lot. It has been going the rounds of our liberal friends, and has been picked up by “Portside,” the leftist republisher. It appeared originally in New York Magazine (not to be confused with The New Yorker) on March 23. “America Takes the Next Step Toward Tyranny” is Sullivan’s title, and he describes the descent of our country into an oligarchy ruled by a madman. This is the same argument he made last week in his New York Times Book Review article, to which we linked in our last must-read. But here he lists all the dangers posed by a Trump presidency, and as you can guess, it is not pretty. As he concludes, he says, “The real possibility of a nuclear conflict with North Korea is getting more real by the day (can you imagine Bolton’s counsel for the Kim Jong-un meeting?); and with Bolton in place, the groundwork for ending the Iran nuclear deal is also finally complete. And what’s noticeable in all this is the irrelevance of the Senate. They refuse to reclaim their treaty-making powers with respect to trade (they could end Trump’s China shenanigans overnight); they have abdicated any influence on foreign policy and war just as they have done nothing to protect the special counsel. They are just like the Roman Senate as the republic collapsed.... But I worry that the more Trump is opposed and even cornered — especially if he loses the House this fall — the more dangerous he will become.... We know he has no concern for the collateral damage his self-advancement has long caused in his private and public life. We know he has contempt for and boundless ignorance of liberal democracy. We know he is capable of anything — of immense cruelty and callousness, of petty revenge and reckless rhetoric, of sudden impulses and a quick temper.... War is coming. And there will be nothing and no one to stop him.” [emphasis added] Do not read before bedtime. <http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2018/03/america-takes-the-next-step-toward-tyranny.html>.

10. On Tuesday, the Trump administration announced that it would add a controversial question about citizenship to the 2020 Census. The Census is used to apportion Congressional seats, and what looks here like an attempt to keep Hispanics from answering could have broad implications for the way maps are drawn. “Critics of Commerce’s move said it is part of a broader pattern of systematic attacks by the Trump administration against Democratic parts of the country on issues ranging from health care to immigration, and one with major ramifications for decisions such as how congressional districts are drawn and how federal funding is spent nationwide,” reported The Washington Post on Mar. 27. “Opponents of asking the citizenship question argue that it will reduce the response rate for the census and undercount the population in areas with high numbers of undocumented immigrants, who could fear participating. As a result, opponents say, states with significant immigrant populations, which are mostly controlled by Democrats, could stand to lose seats in Congress, along with electoral college votes in presidential elections and federal funding based on census counts. Democrats could also lose seats in those state legislatures.” [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trumps-census-citizenship-decision-ignites-legal-and-political-battle/2018/03/27/243097d2-31cb-11e8-8abc-22a366b72f2d\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trumps-census-citizenship-decision-ignites-legal-and-political-battle/2018/03/27/243097d2-31cb-11e8-8abc-22a366b72f2d_story.html).

Also on Tuesday, The New York Times reported that “It least 12 states signaled Tuesday that they would sue to block the Trump administration from adding [a question about citizenship](#) to

the 2020 census, arguing that the change would cause fewer Americans to be counted and violate the Constitution.” Note: the Constitution does not speak about “eligible voters” or even “citizens” but only about “persons.” <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/27/us/census-citizenship-question.html>.

Their editorial that day is headlined, simply, "The Trump Administration Sabotages the Census." <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/27/opinion/trump-census-2020-citizenship.html>.

The Atlantic Magazine speaks of "The Weaponized Census," in their long analysis of the broader issues at stake. One frightening possibility is that, as they quote the Brennan Center as saying, "'by requiring the census to track citizenship status, the administration might be laying the groundwork to push for redistricting based on citizenship figures.' This would face legal challenges, but could provide an irresistible option to Republicans still [fighting the demographic tide](#)." [emphasis added] The courts have ruled that apportioning districts must be done by population, not citizenship, but the Right could be about to challenge this to hold off the demographic changes weakening the Republican vote. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/03/the-weaponized-census/556592/>.

11. "Are you ready? This is all the data Facebook and Google have on you," is the headline in a Thursday article in The Guardian by Dylan Curran. [emphasis added] Curran is a data consultant and web developer who does research on digital privacy. "The harvesting of our personal details goes far beyond what many of us could imagine. So I braced myself and had a look," he says. What he discovered will astound you. Depending on how much you open yourself to Google products, "Google offers an option to download all of the data it stores about you. I've requested to download it and the file is 5.5GB big, which is roughly 3m Word documents. This link includes your bookmarks, emails, contacts, your Google Drive files, all of the above information, your YouTube videos, the photos you've taken on your phone, the businesses you've bought from, the products you've bought through Google .... They also have data from your calendar, your Google hangout sessions, your location history, the music you listen to, the Google books you've purchased, the Google groups you're in, the websites you've created, the phones you've owned, the pages you've shared, how many steps you walk in a day ....

"Facebook offers a similar option to download all your information. Mine was roughly 600MB, which is roughly 400,000 Word documents." <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/mar/28/all-the-data-facebook-google-has-on-you-privacy>.

So, you are disgusted by what you have read about Facebook leaking (or just legally selling ) its reams of data about you? Ready to cut off your ties to the digital-industrial-surveillance state? Not so fast. An article in last Friday's Guardian says, "Delete Facebook? That's as hard as giving up sugar." Dean Burnett, author of The Happy Brain, suggests that certain neural pathways are stimulated by Facebook that make it hard to give up, like an addiction. "It makes evolutionary sense; if your survival depends on being accepted by the group, being rejected by others is literally a matter of life or death, so social interactions always come with an element of risk. Unless, of course, you have the ability to shut out or block those who don't agree with you, or shield yourself from contrasting views. Such a system would be very appealing to the typical human, providing a sense of safety and comfort.... What Facebook and other social networks do is provide the social interactions, connections and approval we seemingly crave, but with less risk and less effort ([something else our brains really respond to](#))." <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/mar/23/delete-facebook-giving-up-sugar-social-networks>.

And of course, Facebook itself makes it hard to cut the cord. You are immersed in an ecosystem that does not let you loose, reports Fortune magazine in a March 24 article titled, "How to Delete Your Facebook Account – And Why It's So Hard to Do." <http://fortune.com/2018/03/24/how-to-delete-your-facebook-account-and-why-its-so-hard-to-do/>.

[Note: The Research Team can suggest, if you wish to use social media, that you can at least mitigate its effects by using an ad blocker on your phone or other device. These can easily be added to your web browser, and you will find that browsing with no ads is a whole new experience. We also suggest avoiding Google products and using a different search engine. We use [DuckDuckGo](#), one of a few that do not track you. You can set the default search engine of your choice in most browsers. Disabling cookies works for some privacy concerns, but some websites will not function well (including any connected with Microsoft, Google, or Yahoo; passwords will not be saved on sites like The New York Times, but you can learn to selectively permit some cookies.) Consult your tech-savvy friends for ways to increase your online privacy.]

12. In The Atlantic for April, former Bush speechwriter and The Washington Post columnist Michael Gerson laments, as an evangelical himself, the slavish support of a man and a president like Trump by his fellow believers. "Trump's background and beliefs could hardly be more incompatible with traditional Christian models of life and leadership. Trump's past political stances (he once supported the right to partial-birth abortion), his character (he has bragged about sexually assaulting women), and even his language (he introduced the words pussy and shithole into presidential discourse) would more naturally lead religious conservatives toward exorcism than alliance. This is a man who has cruelly publicized his infidelities, made disturbing sexual comments about his elder daughter, and boasted about the size of his penis on the debate stage. His lawyer reportedly arranged a \$130,000 payment to a porn star to dissuade her from disclosing an alleged affair. Yet religious conservatives who once blanched at PG-13 public standards now yawn at such NC-17 maneuvers. We are a long way from The Book of Virtues. Trump supporters tend to dismiss moral scruples about his behavior as squeamishness over the president's 'style.' But the problem is the distinctly non-Christian substance of his values. Trump's unapologetic materialism—his equation of financial and social success with human achievement and worth—is a negation of Christian teaching. His tribalism and hatred for 'the other' stand in direct opposition to Jesus's radical ethic of neighbor love. Trump's strength-worship and contempt for 'losers' smack more of Nietzsche than of Christ. Blessed are the proud. Blessed are the ruthless. Blessed are the shameless. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after fame." Gerson writes an impassioned long-form essay that is worth reading, especially for believers. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/04/the-last-temptation/554066/>.

But in a riposte to Gerson, Nation columnist Katha Pollitt takes issue with Gerson's support of the spirit of evangelicalism, suggesting it was founded on hypocrisy all along: "Say what you will about the terrible, terrifying Trump years, one good thing has already come out of them: the discrediting of evangelical Christianity. For decades, believers have boasted of their superior virtue, especially in matters of sex and marriage and parenting and social propriety. They've blasted premarital and extramarital sex, LGBTQ people, divorce, pornography, sex work, foul language, crude behavior, and not being a Christian—as they define 'Christian'—blaming these things for everything from 9/11 to Hurricane Katrina.... [Gerson is] full of nostalgia for the 19th-century evangelicals who opposed slavery, but he never mentions that the largest evangelical denomination by far today, the Southern Baptist Convention, split from those northern abolitionist Baptists in order to defend slavery (and, after that, segregation). He wishes more

people knew about the good works that evangelicals have done and still do, but on what contemporary issue are evangelicals on the right side of history these days? When you look more closely, even those pastors and programs that Gerson lauds can be a bit problematic. One global health organization that he mentions, Franklin Graham's Samaritan's Purse, is tarred with a reputation for heavy-handed proselytizing and Graham's own ravings against Islam as 'an evil and very wicked religion' whose followers are going straight to hell." [emphasis added] <https://www.thenation.com/article/why-evangelicals-still-support-trump/>.

13. What will it take for Democrats to flip the House in November? The New York Times on March 26 provides an interactive chart showing competitive districts by party lean and by Hillary / Trump vote. "The math favors the Democrats: 41 of these competitive seats are held by Republicans, while only 7 are held by Democrats. Most of these races are in districts where Hillary Clinton and Mr. Trump barely outperformed the other in the 2016 presidential race, and many of the incumbents won with smaller margins as well. Even some Republican seats in Trump country are in jeopardy." [emphasis in original] See their helpful chart here: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/03/26/us/elections/house-races-midterms.html>.

14. On March 17, The Washington Post offered an analysis of suburban congressional races: "Once-safe Republican districts suddenly in play as Democrats expand the map." They conclude, after the upset win of Conor Lamb in Pennsylvania, "[i]n the Midwest, South and West, Republican-held districts that had not appeared on the map in recent years, or ever, are in Democrats' sights. The party capitalized on resistance to Trump to produce a robust class of recruits as it aims to erase the GOP's 23-seat advantage and seize the House majority in November." They continue, "Republicans already were bracing for a rough year, with the president's party traditionally losing seats in midterms and dozens of GOP incumbents retiring. The unpopular Trump poses an even tougher challenge for Republicans, as the election has become a referendum on the president. Republicans had hoped — and will continue to try — to make the campaign about their tax cuts." But that failed as a strategy in the Pennsylvania race: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/powerpost/once-safe-republican-districts-suddenly-in-play-as-democrats-expand-the-map/2018/03/17/441460ea-2921-11e8-bc72-077aa4dab9ef\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/powerpost/once-safe-republican-districts-suddenly-in-play-as-democrats-expand-the-map/2018/03/17/441460ea-2921-11e8-bc72-077aa4dab9ef_story.html).

15. And, after Illinois's March 20 primary, The Washington Post reported, dateline Glen Ellyn, IL: "Suburban voters angry with Trump threaten GOP's grip on House." The paper features the race against 6th district Congressman Peter Roskam. "In Illinois' 6th Congressional District, 62,990 people voted Democratic last week for seven candidates, up from just 8,615 in the 2014 primary. In a district that voted for Mitt Romney in 2012 and Hillary Clinton in 2016, a warning is being sent in letters as big and bold as any that have hung on a Trump building," The Post reports. "Roskam's Illinois district has the 15th-highest median income in the country, and in an interview he made clear that he is aware of the challenge facing him. 'I don't underestimate it,' Roskam said when asked about the challenge brought about by increased Democratic enthusiasm. 'Both campaigns are going to be influenced and have to navigate through large national figures — Donald Trump and Nancy Pelosi — neither of whom are particularly popular in my district.'" We do not know how Nancy Pelosi rates in our 6th district, but this perhaps will be a hint of how the Democratic candidate will be attacked. The Post quotes the primary winner and Democratic candidate for the 6th district: "'There's a massive upsurge in interest in the Democratic Party right now,' said Sean Casten, a clean-energy entrepreneur. 'Trump has not done much that's good for the party, but he's certainly raised civic engagement.'"

For his part, "Roskam signaled that explaining the complicated effects of the tax bill on higher-income residents will be a central message of his campaign." <https://www.washingtonpost.com/>

[powerpost/suburban-voters-angry-with-trump-threaten-gop-grip-on-house/2018/03/26/e7c81026-2de3-11e8-8688-e053ba58f1e4\\_story.html](http://powerpost/suburban-voters-angry-with-trump-threaten-gop-grip-on-house/2018/03/26/e7c81026-2de3-11e8-8688-e053ba58f1e4_story.html).

16. On the Republican side, The Hill reports that "A group aligned with Speaker [Paul Ryan](#) (R-Wis.) announced Monday it is launching a new \$1 million ad campaign to promote the new tax law ahead of the midterm elections.... Districts where the ads will run include those held by Reps. [Peter Roskam](#) (R-Ill.), [Claudia Tenney](#) (R-N.Y.) and [Barbara Comstock](#) (R-Va.), AAN [American Action Network] said." <http://thehill.com/policy/finance/380223-gop-group-launches-new-ads-to-promote-tax-law-in-house-districts>.

Best wishes, and Peace,  
The Indivisible DuPage Research Team

"Rise like lions after slumber  
In unvanquishable number—  
Shake your chains to earth like dew  
Which in sleep had fallen on you—  
Ye are many—they are few"

—From "The Mask of Anarchy. Written on the Occasion of the [army] Massacre at Manchester [1819]", By British Romantic Poet Percy Shelley