

Hello Indivisible supporters.

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!)

- "President Trump grew frustrated with lawmakers Thursday in the Oval Office when they floated restoring protections for immigrants from Haiti, El Salvador and African countries as part of a bipartisan immigration deal, according to two people briefed on the meeting. 'Why are we having **all these people from shithole countries** come here?' Trump said, according to these people, **referring to African countries and Haiti**. He then suggested that the United States should instead bring more people from countries like Norway, whose prime minister he met Wednesday." The story was first reported in *The Washington Post* on Thursday evening. "**A White House spokesman defended Trump's position** on immigration without directly addressing [or denying] Trump's remarks." The President suggested we should be **accepting more immigrants from countries like Norway**. [Norwegians were not immediately known to be fleeing here in large numbers.] Read the explosive remarks here: https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-attacks-protections-for-immigrants-from-shithole-countries-in-oval-office-meeting/2018/01/11/bfc0725c-f711-11e7-91af-31ac729add94_story.html?utm_term=.c425348cb6c2 [emphasis added]. [For what some will find an amusing but not at all surprising list of all the countries and leaders Trump has insulted, see the *Huffington Post* report, updated Thursday, here: https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/trump-insult-foreign-countries-leaders_us_59dd2769e4b0b26332e76d57?ncid=inbInkushpmg00000009].

Though the President seemed to deny using the word, in a

tweet Friday morning, the remark was reported by many media outlets as having been said in front of a number of shocked lawmakers. He did not in any way back away from the sentiments or apologize. The White House did not deny that he said what was reported.

BREAKING DEVELOPMENT

This morning, **"Senator Dick Durbin of Illinois said ... that the president did use the term 'shithole' during the course of the meeting on immigration — which Mr. Durbin attended. The senator described Mr. Trump as saying 'things which were hate-filled, vile and racist.'"** So reported *The New York Times* early this morning. In response to Trump's twitter denial, Sen. Durbin reported that **"[h]e said these hate-filled things and he said them repeatedly.' ... 'I cannot believe that, in the history off the White House in that Oval Office, any president has ever spoken the words that I personally heard our president speak yesterday,'** Mr. Durbin said on Friday." <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/12/us/politics/trump-immigration-congress.html?action=Click&contentCollection=BreakingNews&contentID=66348639&pgtype=article>

Condemnation from around the world was swift. See the summary in *The Guardian* here: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/jan/12/unkind-divisive-elitist-international-outcry-over-trumps-shithole-countries-remark>. "One UN official called the remarks racist and said they opened 'the door to humanity's worst side,'" according to a report this morning in the BBC. "The **United Nations human rights office** called the reported comments 'shocking and shameful. I'm sorry but there is no other word for this but racist,' a spokesman in Geneva said." <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-42661435> **"Haiti's ambassador to the United States condemned the statement** and said his country has asked for an explanation of Trump's comments from American officials...Altidor said the Haitian Embassy in Washington was inundated with emails from Americans apologizing for Trump's remark, which he found heartening," reports *The Washington Post* this morning: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2018/01/11/here-is-what-my-shithole-looks-like-african->

[countries-and-haiti-react-to-trumps-remark/?utm_term=.6e5b140ab7e9](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/trump-shithole-countries-norway_us_5a58199ce4b0720dc4c5b6dc?ncid=inblnkushpimg00000009)

Sample **tweet from Norway**: "Norwegians, reading today's news from the States: 'Why in the world would we want to go to that [#shithole](#) country?'" / "[@realDonaldTrump](#) no one from Norway wants to come to [your] shithole country. They have healthcare for all, family leave, free education and real gun control." For more Norwegian reaction to Trump's remarks, see the Jan. 11 *Huffington Post* article, "People On Twitter Tell Trump No One In Norway Wants To Come To His 'Shithole Country,'" https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/trump-shithole-countries-norway_us_5a58199ce4b0720dc4c5b6dc?ncid=inblnkushpimg00000009.

- *"They laughed at me and made jokes...[The officers] were all disloyal. I tried to run the ship properly, by the book, but they fought me at every turn...they encouraged the crew to go around scoffing at me, and spreading wild rumors...Ahh, but the strawberries that's... that's where I had them."* ([-Captain Queeg](#)). The media buzz this week has been about *Fire and Fury* and what may prove to be the red herring of **our leader's mental health**. We begin coverage this week with some discussions in the press of the Trump mental state, as suggested by that Michael Wolff's book.

The most concise treatment of **the case for mental illness** is the coverage in *The Guardian* on Jan. 5. The paper reports that "The sense of urgency surrounding Trump's mental state even led Bandy Lee, an assistant clinical professor at the Yale School of Medicine, to brief a dozen members of Congress last month on the potential risks associated with the president's behavior. Lee, whose career has centered on studying, predicting and preventing violence, told the Guardian she and other psychiatrists were speaking out because they feel 'the danger has become imminent.'" Lee is the editor of *The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump*, a book consisting of essays from 27 mental health professionals assessing the president. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/jan/05/donald-trump-mental-health-fitness-for-office>.

Indeed, Wolff himself has been going the rounds claiming that "**The 25th Amendment**" is constantly being discussed by White House aides (see, for example, the NBC News report, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/fire-fury-author-wolff-says-white-house-staff-discuss-25th-n835366>). But how realistic is it to believe 1) that Trump's mental condition

can be effectively analyzed by professionals who do not examine him; and 2) that such claims would not be dismissed as partisan attacks by liberal doctors? And what damage could this do to dispassionate discussion or examination of a President's mental state (Ronald Reagan was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease 5 years after he left office; but were the signs there earlier and alarming enough for action to have been taken?)

These issues receive an intelligent and thorough airing in an essay in *The Atlantic* by a senior editor, Dr. James Hamblin on Jan. 3, **"Is Something Neurologically Wrong With Donald Trump?"** "Even if the country's psychiatrists were to make a unanimous statement regarding the president's mental health," he points out, "their words may be written off as partisan in today's political environment. With declining support for fact-based discourse and trust in expert assessments, would there be any way of convincing Americans that these doctors weren't simply lying, treasonous 'liberals'—globalist snowflakes who got triggered?" But as for Trump, Hamblin enumerates several worrying incidents and behaviors, and concludes, "Though these moments could be inconsequential, they call attention to the alarming absence of a system to evaluate elected officials' fitness for office—to reassure concerned citizens that the 'leader of the free world' is not cognitively impaired, and on a path of continuous decline." Dr. Hamblin advocates an in-place system to evaluate the mental health of all Presidents. And the results should be public: "A president could be actively hallucinating, threatening to launch a nuclear attack based on intelligence he had just obtained from David Bowie, and the medical community could be relegated to speculation from afar." <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2018/01/trump-cog-decline/548759/>

The New York Times, in a Jan. 10 editorial, **dismisses all the talk of mental illness as a distraction**: it is not as if we did not know he was unfit for the office. In the editorial, "Is Mr. Trump Nuts?", the editorial board says, "Is Donald Trump mentally fit to be president of the United States? It's an understandable question, and it's also beside the point...It's beside the point not because a president's mental capacity doesn't matter, nor because we should blindly accept our leaders' declarations of their own stability, [let alone genius](#). Rather, we don't need a medical degree or a psychiatric diagnosis to tell us what is wrong with Mr. Trump...[H]is behavior may be evidence of some underlying disorder, or it may not. Who knows? The problem lies in trying to locate the essence of Mr. Trump's unfitness in the unknowable reaches of his mind, as opposed to where we

can all openly see it and address it in political terms. As the [psychiatrist Allen Frances](#) told The Times: 'You can't say enough about how incompetent and unqualified he is to be leader of the free world. But that does not make him mentally ill.'...**The best solution is the simplest: Vote, and organize others to register and to vote.**" Read their concise demolition of the whole issue here: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/10/opinion/is-mr-trump-nuts.html> [emphasis added]. And on Jan. 9, Trump organized a televised meeting with lawmakers, likely to show he was in command of his faculties. *Vanity Fair*'s Bess Levin summarizes the meeting, "Trump's Mental-Health Road Show Proves He's Still a Bumbling Idiot...The president's televised 55-minute discussion underscored the fact that he's learned nothing." See her sharp report here: <https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2018/01/trumps-mental-health-road-show-proves-hes-still-a-bumbling-idiot>.

- As for the **accuracy of Wolff's book**, most media sources seem to find its general reporting of the tone and atmosphere of the White House accurate, but some specific details of Wolff's reporting seem questionable. *The Washington Post*'s senior political correspondent, Aaron Blake, concludes, "For whatever reason, Wolff seems to have arrived at a stunning amount of incredible conclusions that hundreds of dogged reporters from major newspapers haven't. Whether that's because he had unprecedented access — Wolff says he had 'something like a semi-permanent seat on a couch in the West Wing'— or because his filter was just more relaxed than others, it's worth evaluating each claim individually and not just taking every scandalous thing said about the White House as gospel." This seems a fair estimate of how the established press has treated the book. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2018/01/03/michael-wolffs-unbelievable-sometimes-literally-tell-all-about-the-trump-administration/?utm_term=.49700dbed9aa.

- As for the liberal fantasy that the conversation about Trump's fitness would be a turning point in public opinion, in fact his **poll numbers**, though still low, have actually increased in the past month, to about 39-40% approval (according to poll aggregators [FiveThirtyEight](#) and [RealClearPolitics](#)). [However, *The New York Times* does report some lowering of his approval across key voting blocs. The numbers do not appear to have dropped much among Republicans and Trump voters, that is, those who supported him to begin with, as *The Times* admits: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/>

[2018/01/11/us/politics/trump-approval.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/11/us/politics/trump-approval.html)].

- So, is “collusion” a crime? No. What exactly would be the **legal ground for any impeachment**? One of the clearest summaries of the legal issues in the press so far is by Jeffrey Toobin, who has been following the Trump case for *The New Yorker*. See his summary of exactly what is meant by “obstruction” or “criminal conspiracy” in this case, and whether and how a President can be held legally accountable: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/12/11/michael-flynn-guilty-plea-sends-donald-trumps-lawyers-scrumbling>.

- Meanwhile, there are reports that Special Counsel Robert **Mueller** “told President Trump’s lawyers last month that he **will probably seek to interview the president**, setting off discussions among Mr. Trump’s lawyers about the perils of such a move, two people familiar with the discussion said on Monday.” *The New York Times* reports on Jan. 8 that “Mr. Trump’s lawyers are expected to try to set ground rules for any interview or provide answers to written questions. If Mr. Trump were to refuse outright to cooperate, Mr. Mueller could respond with a grand jury subpoena.” https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/08/us/politics/mueller-trump-interview-russia-investigation.html?_r=0 [emphasis added]. On Jan. 10, however, *The Times* reported that “**President Trump declined** on Wednesday **to commit to being interviewed** by Robert S. Mueller III, the special counsel investigating whether his campaign colluded with Russia to sway the 2016 election, backing off his statement last year that he would be willing to talk to Mr. Mueller under oath.” <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/10/us/politics/trump-russia-election-interference.html>.

- **What questions would Robert Mueller have for the President**, and what is he likely trying to find out? Did Trump attempt to cover up misdeeds by his campaign staff or lie about his own potential obstruction of the Russia investigation? Read Aaron Blake’s “6 burning questions Robert Mueller will want to ask President Trump,” in the Jan. 9 *Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2018/01/09/six-burning-questions-robert-mueller-will-want-to-ask-president-trump/?utm_term=.768a589c7231.

And, also in *The Washington Post*, Randall D. Eliason, who teaches white-collar criminal law at George Washington University Law School, explains the reasoning behind **Mueller’s need to question Trump in person** and

how the legal wrangling over his testimony will play out: https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/what-we-know-about-trumps-potential-testimony-in-the-mueller-probe/2018/01/09/8b9bb538-f4da-11e7-b34a-b85626af34ef_story.html?utm_term=.0edb716a474a.

- Turning our attention, as we should, to the danger to our republic's health, welfare, and security, we report on the **administration's plan to permit states to require Medicaid recipients to work**, or to volunteer in the community. "'Productive work and community engagement may improve health outcomes,' Brian Neale, the director of the federal Medicaid office, said on Thursday in a letter to state Medicaid directors. 'For example, higher earnings are positively correlated with longer life span.' In addition, Mr. Neale said, researchers have found 'strong evidence that unemployment is generally harmful to health,' while employment tends to improve 'general mental health.'" So reports *The New York Times* on Thursday. So, we are told, working is good for the poor, and their bad health is linked to their not working hard enough (many Medicare recipients do work already).

There would be some humane exemptions for the pregnant, disabled, elderly, and (thankfully) children. [*"At this festive season of the year, Mr Scrooge,' said the gentleman, taking up a pen, 'it is more than usually desirable that we should make some slight provision for the Poor and destitute...' Are there no prisons?' 'Plenty of prisons,' said the gentleman, laying down the pen again. 'And the Union workhouses.' demanded Scrooge, 'Are they still in operation?'"*] Despite such exemptions, "Democrats called the new policy inhumane, meanspirited and malicious, echoing criticism of work requirements in a welfare law adopted in 1996. Representative Frank Pallone Jr. of New Jersey, the senior Democrat on the House Energy and Commerce Committee, said that 'the Trump administration's action today is cruel and a clear violation of both the Medicaid statute and longstanding congressional intent' for waivers, which he said were meant to 'allow states to expand access to Medicaid, not restrict it.'" Read the report in *The New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/11/us/politics/medicaid-work-requirements.html>.

- "The House of Representatives voted on Thursday to **extend the National Security Agency's warrantless surveillance program** for six years with minimal changes, rejecting a push by a bipartisan group of lawmakers to impose significant privacy limits when it sweeps up

Americans' emails and other personal communications." Read *The New York Times* story of the NSA's carte blanche to read emails and listen to phone calls from Americans without a warrant, when they are communicating with foreigners. "Before voting to extend the law, known as Section 702 of the FISA Amendments Act, the House rejected an amendment that would have imposed a series of new safeguards. That proposal included a requirement that officials obtain warrants in most cases before hunting for, and reading, emails and other messages of Americans that were swept up under the surveillance." <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/11/us/politics/fisa-surveillance-congress-trump.html>. Also read *The Times*'s summary of reactions to the extension of warrantless surveillance from left and right in the press: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/11/us/politics/right-left-react-nsa-spying-warantless-surveillance.html>.

- On Tuesday, a federal judge in California issued a **nationwide injunction preventing the Trump administration from deporting** young people brought here by their parents, so-called "**dreamers**." The administration must keep DACA in place for now, said the judge, while legal challenges to the law proceed. "In his ruling, Judge Alsup questioned the administration's contention that the DACA program had not been put into place legally. He asserted that the secretary of the Department of Homeland Security has long had the authority to grant the kind of temporary protections that formed the basis of the program." Moreover, "**previous beneficiaries of DACA, known as Dreamers, must be allowed to renew their status** in the program, though the government will not be required to accept new applications from immigrants who had not previously submitted one." However, the Trump administration could appeal the decision, which could tie up the final status of Dreamers for a long time. Only Congress can solve the problem with a bill that would definitively legalize dreamers' status. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/09/us/trump-daca-improper.html>.

On Thursday, *Politico* reported that "A bipartisan group of six senators has reached a **deal that would shield Dreamers** from deportation and make other changes to immigration laws and border security — but the framework has yet to win over the White House and other key players on Capitol Hill." However, liberal Democrats and some conservative Republicans are not supportive. House Democrats are reported infuriated with changes to family immigration policies. Read the details here: <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/01/11/dreamers-deal-reached-but-trump-has-yet-to-sign-off-336501>. Senator **Durbin** was said to have signed off on the

plan. **This was the plan rejected by Trump**, in his infamous scatological slur, reported above.

- In the wake of the Wolff book, **Trump has also called for strengthening US libel laws**, presumably so that he could bring suit against his critics. Legal scholars say that a President has no power to do so, barring a Constitutional amendment. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/10/business/media/trump-libel-laws.html>. [No word on whether Haiti could then bring suit for libel against Trump.]

- **"Donald Trump has backed off the idea of visiting Britain** next month to open the new US embassy in London amid fears of mass protests." So reports *The Guardian* on Thursday: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/jan/12/donald-trump-visit-to-london-call-ed-off-amid-fears-of-mass-protests>.

- An odd remark of Trump comes out of a *Wall Street Journal* interview on Thursday, as reported by *Politico*. Readers will be surprised, or confused, to hear that "President **Donald Trump said he 'probably' has 'a very good relationship' with Kim Jong Un** but would not say whether he has spoken to the North Korean leader during an interview with The Wall Street Journal Thursday... 'I have relationships with people. I think you people are surprised.'" <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/01/11/trump-interview-very-good-relationshipp-kim-jong-un-336941>.

- Political scientist Dan Reiter, in a *Washington Post* op-ed, suggests that nuclear **war with North Korea is actually not very likely**. He lists several mitigating factors that act to prevent war. "Strategic theory suggests that if you really think the adversary is about to attack, and you really think there is an advantage to attacking first, then preemptive war becomes more attractive. Happily, neither condition exists between the United States and North Korea. Most importantly, neither side is likely to preempt because neither side really thinks the other will attack first. The U.S.-North Korean relationship is actually far more stable than most people think." He explains why here: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/01/11/should-you-worry-about-a-u-s-war-with-north-korea-not-really/?utm_term=.3df250a49dd2.

- *On the other hand*, not to be alarmist, but last Saturday *Politico* reported that "U.S. military officials increasingly worry that a **mistake or miscommunication** — even more than an intentional act of war — **could start a nuclear conflict** in Korea." [emphasis added] The journal lists

several frightening scenarios, and quotes a former assistant to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Michael Mazzar, as saying, "the most likely route to a big war' is a decision by the United States 'to take military action it believes will be small' [the so-called "bloody-nose" attack]." Judge the danger yourself, by reading here: <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/01/06/north-korea-nuclear-war-264526>

And a scholarly article in *Foreign Affairs* for Nov-Dec. 2017 by Scott Sagan, professor of Political Science at Stanford University, "**The Korean Missile Crisis**," studies the precedent of the Cuban Missile Crisis to understand the current North Korean threat. He warns, "accidents, misperceptions, and volatile leaders could all too easily cause disaster. The Cold War offers important lessons in how to reduce these risks by practicing containment and deterrence wisely. But officials in the Pentagon and the White House face a new and unprecedented challenge: they must deter North Korean leader Kim Jong Un while also preventing U.S. President Donald Trump from stumbling into war." <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/north-korea/2017-09-10/korean-missile-crisis> [requires browsers to set cookies.] 🖱️ This will interest those with a background in political science or history, or just those curious to see a long, scholarly treatment of the crisis, which recommends the George Kennan approach of deterrence, containment, and above all, patience.

- Readers will be comforted to know that if there is a nuclear exchange in our future, the CDC is on top of it. "On Jan. 16, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will present a workshop titled '**Public Health Response to a Nuclear Detonation**,' for doctors, government officials, emergency responders and others whom, if they survived, would be responsible for overseeing the emergency response to a nuclear attack. 'While a nuclear detonation is unlikely,' [the C.D.C. states on its website](https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2017/s0116-nuclear-response.html), 'it would have devastating results and there would be limited time to take critical protection steps. Despite the fear surrounding such an event, planning and preparation can lessen deaths and illness.'" [emphasis added] *Trigger warning for snowflakes who melt at idea of nuclear holocaust*: Do not read before bedtime: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/05/health/cdc-nuclear-attack.html>.

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