

Hello Indivisible supporters. *We bring you the news this week a day early, given holiday plans.*

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!)

• **Why are Republicans going ahead with a tax plan NY billionaire Michael Bloomberg has called “a trillion dollar blunder”?** Read this analysis in *The Washington Post* on Dec. 16 by economics correspondent Heather Long: "A surprising number of chief executives admit their top plan for the extra cash is to pay shareholders more, not grow jobs and wages...Why are Republicans doing this?...Political analysts say it's all about the 2018 midterm elections. President Trump and Republicans swept into office in November 2016 and so far have few major legislative achievements." Long also details all the risks to the economy posed by the bill. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2017/12/16/why-republicans-shouldnt-be-so-optimistic-their-tax-bill-will-be-a-big-win/?utm_term=.5ff4a4678581

And here is **the view from abroad**, in the UK's *The Guardian*: "Democrats say the failure to write a bill that would comply with Senate rules – an avoidable misstep – underscored the slapdash manner and lightening fast speed at which Republicans assembled their tax overhaul. The urgency among Republicans to pass a tax bill before the year's end was similarly underscored when they provided lawmakers with a copy of the 500-page tax plan hours before an initial vote was scheduled on the legislation. In an online video, Senator Jon Tester, Democrat of Montana, called it 'Washington DC at its worst' as he flipped through the pages, showing off the handwritten changes in the margins." The paper quotes Nancy Pelosi, who "described it as 'an all-out looting of America, a wholesale robbery of

the middle class' and said: 'The GOP tax scam will go down, again, as one of the worst, most scandalous acts of plutocracy in our history.'...[the bill]," *The Guardian* continues, "also contains provisions to allow oil drilling in Alaska's Arctic national wildlife refuge, and would eliminate the Affordable Care Act's individual mandate, which requires Americans to either buy health insurance or pay a penalty....Independent analyses have shown Trump and his cabinet stand to gain millions through a provision within the bill that doubles the exemption of the so-called estate tax." Much of this Democratic reaction and the ancillary provisions in the bill has been un- or under-reported in the US press: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/dec/19/donald-trump-tax-bill-plan-house-approves-senate>

And more sinister explanations for this "trillion dollar blunder" abound.

•**Is the new tax law product of corruption**, benefiting those who passed it? So says *The New York Times* in an editorial excoriating the bill and its means of passage. Recall that TN Senator Bob Corker opposed the bill at first. Then large benefits were put in place to enrich powerful real estate interests, including those of Trump and Corker himself. *The Times's* editorial board, in a piece titled, "Tax Bill Lets Trump and Republicans Feather Their Own Nests," says, "To understand the cynicism and mendacity underlying the Republican tax bill, look no further than a provision that would [benefit President Trump and other property tycoons](#) that is in the final legislation....The provision would allow people who make money from real estate to take a 20 percent deduction on income they earn through limited liability companies, partnerships and other so-called pass-through entities that do not pay the corporate tax. The beneficiaries would also include members of Congress like Senator Bob Corker, who last week decided he would vote for the bill even though Republican leaders did nothing to address his concerns about an exploding federal deficit." Read the editorial here: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/18/opinion/tax-bill-trump-republicans.html?_r=0

The stink of **corruption** was reported by *The Times* and also in a **detailed critique by *The International Business Times*** for Dec. 15, which finds, "Republican congressional leaders and real estate moguls could be personally enriched by a real-estate-related provision GOP lawmakers slipped into the final tax bill released Friday evening, according

to experts interviewed by International Business Times.” <http://www.ibtimes.com/political-capital/donald-trump-gop-leaders-could-be-enriched-last-minute-tax-break-inserted-final> And *The Times*’s **Paul Krugman calls it outright corruption**, "Unless something drastic happens, this will be the week Republicans ram through a tax cut that adds more than a trillion dollars to federal debt while undermining health care for millions. They will do so by violating all previous norms for major legislation, having held not a single hearing and rushed to a vote before the new senator from Alabama could be seated..." Krugman suggests that, ironically, politicians who expect they may *lose* in a Democratic wave in 2018 have a perverse motive to support the bill, both to please donors as well as prospective employers when they leave office, and also to feather their own nests. "Given what looks like a [building Democratic wave](#), your odds of keeping that seat next year look low whatever you do — so it’s time to focus on pleasing your future employers on K Street. And when it comes to the Senate, bear in mind that many senators are personally wealthy, meaning that they might be swayed by policies that enhance their personal fortunes. Which brings us to the 'Corker kickback'..." Krugman admits that Corker, when pressed on this issue, has denied any role in adding the real estate provisions. But he has offered no explanation for his change of vote. Read the scathing attack here: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/18/opinion/republicans-taxes-corruption.html>

The real goal of course, is exactly to **balloon the deficit and dismantle the welfare state**, as Paul Ryan has tacitly admitted. An interesting analysis in *The Atlantic* suggests that indeed "Blowing Up the Deficit Is Part of the Plan." However, says Princeton historian Julian E. Zelizer, this plan may blow up in their faces, "Republicans are hoping to use the deficits created by their own tax cuts to slash the social safety net—but they may end up setting the stage for tax hikes instead...Speaker of the House Paul Ryan has already announced that the GOP plans to cut federal health care and anti-poverty programs because of a deficit that his party is about to balloon...Yet the unintended consequence of tax cuts of this scale and scope might be to create a political space for Democrats to push for higher taxes in the future." <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/12/blowing-up-the-deficit-is-part-of-the-plan/548720/>

The Washington Post’s Heather Long agrees, suggesting this bill is just the

beginning of an ugly debate, one the Republicans could lose: “[T]he short-term gains come with a cost: **The legislation also makes the country’s debt problem even worse**, in all likelihood forcing policymakers in coming years to make difficult decisions about spending cuts, tax increases or both. The debate could touch on some of the most value-laden questions facing the nation — what type of financial security to provide the elderly, what safety net services should be offered to the poor, and how much the government should try to shrink economic inequality.” [emphasis added] https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/the-republican-tax-bill-was-the-easy-part-the-next-debate-could-be-much-uglier/2017/12/19/a9c94e2c-e4df-11e7-a65d-1ac0fd7f097e_story.html?utm_term=.272c5252af98

And *The Post’s* Dana Milbank suggests that this bill could become so unpopular it will be **The Republican Obamacare**: "Republicans are making impossibly high promises, and if anything goes wrong — if the economy doesn’t boom, wages don’t soar and the middle class doesn’t rebound — it will be the fault of this legislation, soon to be labeled 'the Trump Tax' by Democrats." And the bill is in even worse shape than Obamacare ever was: "[USA Today reported](#) last week that the bill had 'the lowest level of public support for any major piece of legislation enacted in the past three decades, including the Affordable Care Act in 2009.'" https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/republicans-have-their-own-obamacare-now/2017/12/19/41363698-e4fa-11e7-ab50-621fe0588340_story.html?utm_term=.00837d0bce7b

The New York Times emphasizes the “**Trojan horse**” **cuts hidden in the bill**, which “serv[e] as a setup for steep government cuts. Programs from Medicare to flood insurance to food stamps will be at risk the moment President Trump’s signature dries. Some reductions would be inflicted automatically. Others, Republicans will pursue with a handy justification — the revenue hole created by their own legislation. Under the Pay-as-You-Go Act of 2010, or Paygo, the Office of Budget and Management has to order automatic spending cuts if legislation passed by Congress is set to increase the deficit and the rules aren’t waived or the loss isn’t covered by new revenue.” <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/20/opinion/republican-tax-bill-senate-house.html>

•"**Democrats are surging in 2018 congressional polling,**" is *The Washington Post's* headline for a Dec. 20 report on the "generic ballot" polling so far. [emphasis added] The polling asks voters which party they would vote for in the coming House elections: "In the past five results from live-caller polls, the results have been Democrats plus-13, Democrats plus-15, Democrats plus-11, Democrats plus-15 and Democrats plus-18. (Those are from Marist, Monmouth, NBC-Wall Street Journal, Quinnipiac and CNN-SRSS.)" Though it is early days, this is good news for those of us hoping to flip our Congressional districts blue. A complete breakdown of the numbers and the demographics is here: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/politics/wp/2017/12/20/democrats-are-surging-in-2018-congressional-polling/?utm_term=.4c9feb1337d0 The surge is also evident in the **Fivethirtyeight polling average** for the generic race, with Dems ahead at over 49% preference: https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/congress-generic-ballot-polls/?ex_cid=rrpromo

•**Merry Christmas? Happy Holidays? Has Christmas been hijacked by Fox news** and a new kind of religious-political movement that *New York Times* religion reporter Amy Sullivan calls "Fox Evangelicalism"? "[Trump] has spent November and December taking victory laps, telling crowds at political rallies in Utah and Florida that 'Christmas is back, better and bigger than ever before'....Every one of Mr. Trump's predecessors declared 'Merry Christmas,' too — including Barack Obama, whose message at last year's Christmas tree-lighting ceremony was virtually indistinguishable from Mr. Trump's. What matters to Fox evangelicals, though, is not that Mr. Trump observes Christmas but that he casts himself as the defender of the Christian holiday. From the beginning, the War on Christmas was a homegrown Fox News cause...But it was never really a religious argument....Fox News still gives the supposed controversy wall-to-wall coverage and has folded it into the network's us-versus-them, nationalist programming. The regular Fox News viewer, whether or not he is a churchgoer, takes in a steady stream of messages that conflate being white and conservative and evangelical with being American." Read Sullivan's "The War on Christmas," and find out why evangelicalism in the Fox mode has transformed Christianity into a secular cultural movement of nationalism, fear-mongering, and materialism. And why suddenly "Merry Christmas" has become "weaponized" in the culture wars: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/15/opinion/sunday/war-christmas->

[evangelicals.html](#)

•The **Trump administration's immigration policy** is not merely sharp words, as we all know. It has powerful and often heartbreaking effects on people, often the most helpless. Two stories this week: "More than 90 Somali men and women were held shackled on an airplane for nearly 48 hours – and some were forced to urinate where they sat – during a failed attempt to deport them from the US, according to [a lawsuit filed late on Monday](#)." So reports *The Guardian*, though there was some notice of this in the US press as well. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/dec/19/somalis-shackled-48-hours-failed-us-deportation-flight>

Second: *The Washington Post* Dec. 15 headline says it all: "As migrants flee for Canada, **fears are rising over the perils of frigid illegal crossings**." [emphasis added] https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/as-migrants-flee-for-canada-fears-are-rising-over-the-perils-of-frigid-illegal-crossings/2017/12/15/0e572280-e006-11e7-8679-a9728984779c_story.html?utm_term=.0bd46272000f Yes, people have died. Reading this is truly heart-rending.

•It may not be happy news to keep up your holiday spirit, but you probably *do* want to know just how close we are to **war with North Korea** (and forgive the bold face type, which we admit may seem alarming). *The Washington Post* reports on a little-noticed meeting between a UN envoy and North Korean officials. "A senior U.N. envoy who visited Pyongyang this month carrying a pressing appeal for diplomacy was told by his North Korean hosts that it was 'too early' for steps that might ease the confrontation over their nuclear program...The North Korean reluctance to enter talks now puts it on a potential collision course with the United States. President Trump [warned](#) this week: 'America and its allies will take all necessary steps to achieve a denuclearization and ensure that this regime cannot threaten the world. . . . It will be taken care of.'" For more details see the Dec. 19 report by David Ignatius: https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/what-north-korea-told-a-un-envoy-trying-to-prevent-war/2017/12/19/2cdef370-e50d-11e7-ab50-621fe0588340_story.html?utm_term=.6b76580ac167

•As for war drums, Trump issued a new "**National Security Strategy**" last

week. It received some notice in the US press, but the embrace of nuclear weapons was generally buried in the stories. Not in *The Guardian*, which headlined "US could broaden its use of nuclear weapons, Trump administration signals." The paper remarks that "The Trump administration signaled that it could broaden the use of nuclear weapons as part of a new security strategy, unveiled by the president on Monday. The **wider role for nuclear weapons** against "non-nuclear strategic attacks" was one of several ways in which Trump's approach differed from his predecessor. The threat of climate change went unmentioned. The word "climate" was used only four times in the National Security Strategy (NSS), and three of those mentions referred to the business environment. Americans were instead urged to 'embrace energy dominance.' Announcing the NSS, Donald Trump depicted his election victory and his presidency as an unprecedented turning point in US history. 'America is coming back, and America is coming back strong,' the president said. 'We are rebuilding our nation, our confidence, and our standing in the world ... [W]e will stand up for ourselves, and we will stand up for our country like we have never stood up before.'" <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/dec/18/nuclear-weapons-trump-national-security-strategy> [emphasis added]

The New York Times's Roger Cohen calls the strategy "A farce." In his Dec. 19 op-ed, he remarks that, "On any one issue, President Trump and his team have several contradictory positions. That's what happens when your priority as president is to use foreign policy to throw red meat to your base while other cabinet members are scrambling to stop Armageddon. 'It's impossible to know what the United States position is on any number of subjects,' a European ambassador told me last week. 'We could go sleepwalking into a war.'" <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/19/opinion/trump-national-security-strategy-tillerson-haley.html>

•Locally, **candidate Kelly Mazeski** is featured in a Dec.18 *The New York Times* report on **suburban races around the country**, which mentions the IL 6th District as one of the most contested. *The Times* remarks on Peter Roskam's vulnerability in a Hillary-voting district. "Seven Democrats are jockeying to challenge Mr. Roskam in the western suburbs of Chicago, and they have largely gravitated toward a single message. Kelly Mazeski, a

planning commissioner in Barrington Hills and a leading Democratic contender, rebuked Mr. Roskam for his positions on health care and taxes, but for one transgression most of all. 'Most of the time, I talk about Peter Roskam — that's who my opponent is,' Ms. Mazeski said. 'But to be clear, his voting record is 97 percent of the Trump agenda.'" https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/18/us/politics/house-control-2018-suburbs-trump-republicans-democrats.html?_r=1

So, as our friends in the movement prepare to visit family and friends, let us all recall that we are now in the **Season of Peace and Good Will Toward All People. May it be so.**

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