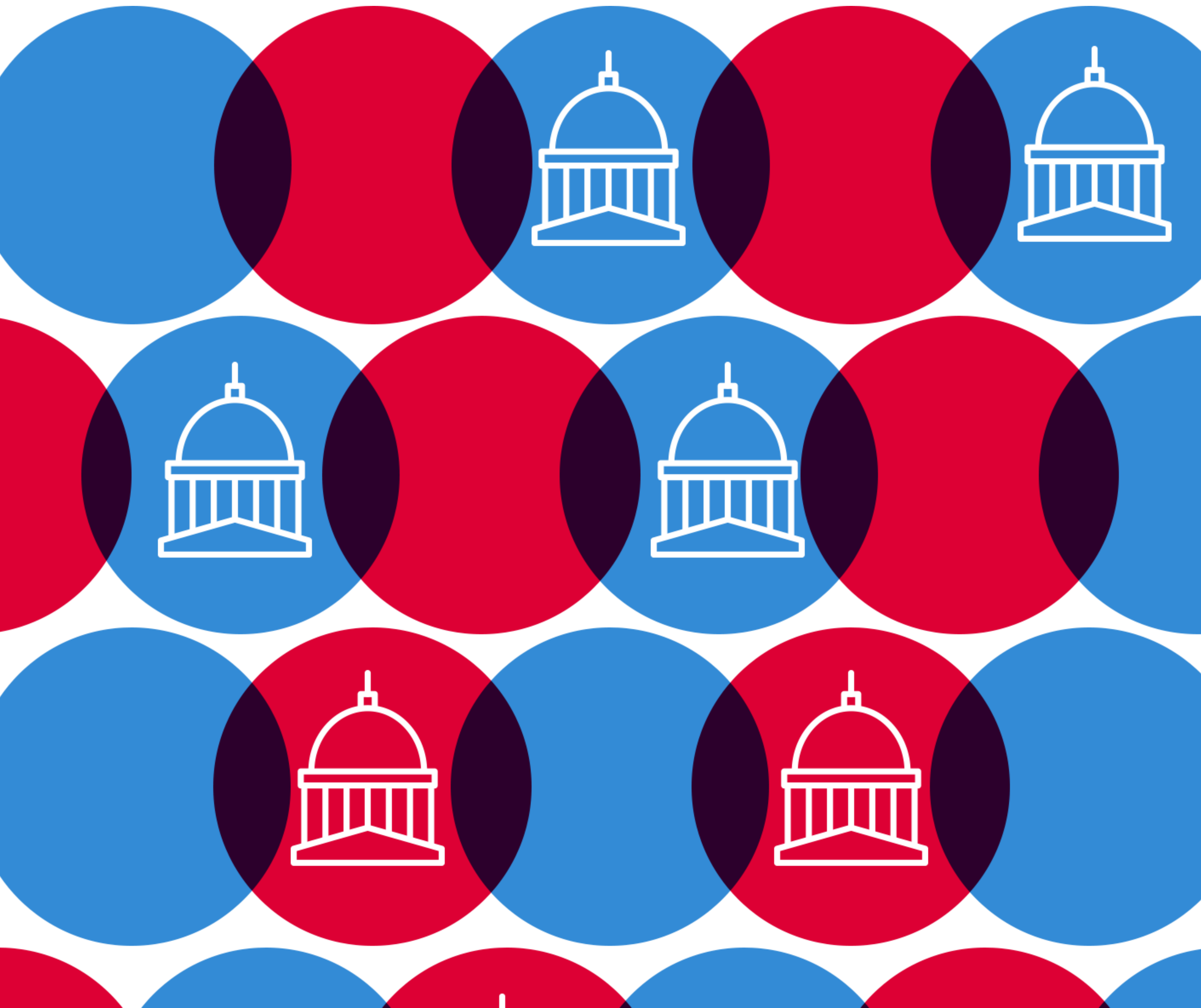
THE CENTURY FOUNDATION

14 Progressive Priorities for the New Congress



THE CENTURY FOUNDATION

Introduction

BY MARK ZUCKERMAN

When the 116th Congress is seated, it presents a new opportunity for the country to tackle some of the nation's most pressing public policy challenges, from unprecedented levels of income and wealth inequality, to rising racial segregation in our school system, to the tens of millions of Americans who still lack quality health care.

Below, we have outlined over a dozen decisive actions Congress should take in the new Congress. The policies aim to make college more affordable, improve educational outcomes by diversifying K–12 classrooms, and protect vulnerable students from predatory for-profit schools. They would help expand Medicaid and ensure every American has access to affordable health insurance. They would strengthen working families through better child care support, reduced housing costs, and guaranteed paid leave to parents. They would help rebalance the scales for labor, increasing wages and benefits for care workers, safeguarding the right to organize, and protecting employees whose jobs are at risk of displacement due to automation. They would preserve the integrity of the Census, maintaining its accuracy and recognizing its importance for the equitable distribution of government resources. And they would ensure that American foreign policy practice matches our moral as well as strategic goals abroad.

These priorities have been culled from across TCF's broad array of research initiatives. They embody the spirit of our nearly one-hundred-year-old institution, with a history marked by independence, rigor, and outside-the-box thinking. And they are practical ideas, with the potential to gain both public and political support, from across the aisle, and improve the lives of millions of Americans, in every corner of the country.

On behalf of TCF and our experts, we welcome the opportunity to work with community leaders, advocates, and policymakers to take action on these urgent priorities.

14 PROGRESSIVE PRIORITIES FOR THE NEW CONGRESS

Expanding Educational Opportunity

+ Achieving Debt-Free College through a Federal–State Partnership
+ Creating a Federal Funding Stream to Help Diversify Public Schools
+ Closing "Covert For-Profit" Loophole that Allows Colleges and Universities to Escape Accountability

Reforming Health Care

+ Strengthening Health Care through the Public Option and Other Reforms
+ Closing the Medicaid Coverage Gap

Strengthening Workers' Rights

+ Protecting Workers by Strengthening the Right to Organize
+ Strengthening Child Care Support for Working Families
+ Providing Paid Leave for Family Caregiving

Protecting Jobs and Revitalizing Communities

+ Making Housing Desegregated and More Affordable through an Economic Fair Housing Act
+ Assisting Workers Facing Technology-Related Job Loss
+ Addressing Child Poverty through an Expanded Child Tax Credit
+ Promoting High-Wage Jobs by Revitalizing Our Manufacturing Communities

Protecting the Integrity of the Census

+ Saving the 2020 Census and Defending Vulnerable Communities by Eliminating the Citizenship Question

Taking Control of the War on Terror

+ Ending U.S. Military Support for the War in Yemen

Achieving Debt-Free College through a Federal-State Partnership

BY JEN MISHORY

College costs have skyrocketed, and most people agree that we can and must do more to reduce student debt. And while states have traditionally sat in the driver's seat of higher education finance, the evolving challenges and growing national imperative to provide an affordable pathway to a college degree mean that Congress can and should partner with states to do more.

The growing share of high school graduates who have enrolled in college over the past three decades, combined with increased numbers of people going to college later in life, means that more people today enroll in college and those new enrollees are more likely to come from low- and moderate-income families.[1] Both total college enrollment and the percentage of the population enrolled in college each year has increased significantly since 1990,[2] a year when just 46 percent of high school graduates from the bottom income quintile enrolled in college; by 2015, nearly 60 percent of those students enrolled.[3]

But states have been unable to maintain their traditional role in controlling higher education affordability, failing to keep up with the combination of increased enrollment rates, costs in the education sector that have risen faster than inflation,[4] and the increased financial need of students. Instead, between 1990 and 2015, state spending per full-time-equivalent (FTE) student at public institutions declined by 15 percent on average, nationwide,[5] and the percentage of instructional costs paid by students and federal aid, rather than by state and local governments, increased from 25 percent to 47 percent.[6] State financing levels and distribution vary significantly across states, meaning that the average student in some states may expect to leave campus with as much as twice as much debt as those with more affordable options.

These trends create a perfect storm for today's college enrollees, particularly over a time period when wages for low-income earners (with a mean income of $13,000) declined by almost 6 percent and wages for middle-income families have stagnated or declined.[7] (By comparison, over the same time period, mean wages for the top income quintile increased by 26 percent, to about $215,000.)[8]

The federal government has taken on an increasing role in the financing of higher education through the Pell grant and veterans education benefits—but has not done enough to stem the tide of rising costs borne now by students and families: the net burden faced by students to cover tuition as well as other expenses, after grant aid, has increased by 18 percent at public two-year colleges and 87 percent at public four-year colleges since 1990.[9] Students (and their families) who cannot pay this ballooning net price directly typically rely on student loans.

What is needed is a larger and more intentional federal-state partnership in financing public higher education. As Congress considers expanding its role in financing higher education, it should build a partnership that:

+ invests new federal dollars as a match to state spending on higher education, designing the match percentage covered by the federal government to account for wealth inequities across states, respond to economic downturns, and adequately incentivize state participation;

+ gives states a choice of discrete free and debt-free affordability targets, taking into account tuition and other college costs like rent and books, so that states can decide on the right financing structure; and

+ addresses existing and projected gaps in the operating capacity at public colleges and requires equity-focused nonmonetary requirements.

Lessons from federal-state partnerships in other sectors can point the way for developing a program through which federal spending can put states back on the right track and build a path toward debt-free college.[10] Congress should pursue a new federal–state partnership in funding higher education that accounts for the economic circumstances in the state; sets funding at levels that make it likely states will participate; gives state choices about how to buy in; and ensures states serve low-income students well.

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Creating a Federal Funding Stream to Help Diversify Public Schools

BY RICHARD D. KAHLENBERG, HALLEY POTTER, AND KIMBERLY QUICK

A vast body of research on racial and socioeconomic integration[1] has led to a consensus among scholars and researchers: integrated schools are beneficial for all people.[2] On average, students in socioeconomically and racially diverse schools—regardless of a student's own economic status—have stronger academic outcomes than students who attend racially isolated schools with concentrated poverty. They have higher test scores, are less likely to drop out of school, and are more likely to enroll in college.

Importantly, research has shown that all students, not just disadvantaged students, benefit from attending integrated schools, in ways that go beyond test scores. Racially and socioeconomically diverse classrooms can help reduce racial bias and counter stereotypes, improve students' critical thinking and problem solving skills, and encourage students to seek out integrated settings later in life. As privatization schemes are on the rise, diverse schools also play a vital role in strengthening the health of our democracy and bolstering the future of public education by increasing civic engagement and spreading the message that we are all political equals.[3]

But while the benefits of integration and harms of segregation are clear, America's schools are by many measures more segregated now than they have been in decades. According to a 2016 report from the Government Accountability Office, the percentage of schools in which 75–100 percent of students were low-income and black or Hispanic grew from 9 percent to 16 percent between 2000–01 and 2013–14.[4]

Since 1965, the federal government has acknowledged the need to provide extra support for schools that face the challenge of concentrated poverty through Title I funding, which in fiscal year 2018 amounts to $15.8 billion, making it the largest federal K–12 spending program. But while Title I plays an important role in helping address the educational needs of low-income students, it has not been enough to close achievement gaps.[5] On the National Assessment for Educational Progress, race-based achievement gaps have seen only slight narrowing in recent years, and socioeconomic achievement gaps have been stagnant since the mid-1990s.[6] Low-income students score multiple years of learning behind their higher-income peers. Research finds that money matters in education, but it is insufficient without integration and equity in schools.[7]

While maintaining a commitment to support high-poverty schools, the federal government should do more to address the root problem of segregation and foster efforts to create and sustain integrated public schools.

Congress can encourage state- and locally-led efforts to integrate schools by making the following investments:

+ Fund states to develop programs similar to one in New York State[8] that identify the most segregated districts in their state and offer those districts (and charter school operators within the districts) funding and professional development to support the creation and implementation of integration strategies such as controlled choice enrollment plans or attendance zone changes.[9]

+ Create a new grant program for consortia of districts or charter schools to develop and implement interdistrict integration efforts, along the lines of the Strength in Diversity Act introduced by Senator Chris Murphy and Congresswoman Marcia L. Fudge.[10]

+ Double federal funding for magnet schools and strengthen the federal Magnet School Assistance Program requirements regarding desegregation. Magnet schools can advance integration by drawing students from across geographic areas, factoring diversity into their admissions lotteries, and selecting themes to appeal to a broad range of families.

At a time when American democratic values and public education are threatened, it is important to lift up and strengthen public schools that are serving our democracy well. Some communities[11] have already begun work to integrate their schools.[12] TCF has identified 100 districts and charter schools that are taking conscious steps to promote racial and socioeconomic diversity.[13] But significant political and legal impediments stand in the way of achieving integrated schooling. Federal support is needed to maintain this momentum and accelerate local and state work across the country.

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Closing "Covert For-Profit" Loophole that Allows Colleges and Universities to Escape Accountability

BY ROBERT SHIREMAN AND YAN CAO

America's colleges and universities are a source of national pride. While there are ongoing national discussions about college affordability and the heavy burden of student loan debt, there is little doubt about the quality and value of most American college degrees. The pay gap between college graduates and everyone else, for example, has never been higher.[1]

But, this tradition of quality and value does not quite hold up in the for-profit college sector, where owners and investors can enrich themselves at the expense of their students. Due to a long history of scandal going back decades,[2] for-profit colleges have a deservedly bad reputation. Owners of for-profit schools, fueled by taxpayer-backed student loans, frequently grow their schools rapidly,[3] while overcharging for the education and using the proceeds for aggressive recruiting and profit.[4] In many cases, the schools mislead prospects about the value of their schools' programs[5] and the promise of a high-paying job.[6] They commonly use manipulative sales tactics,[7] hire unqualified faculty,[8] enroll unprepared students,[9] and hide their misdeeds through forced arbitration clauses,[10] all while leaving students with crushing student loan debts[11] and school executives and investors with bulging bank accounts.[12]

Practices in the sector have eviscerated the value of a for-profit college degree—many programs have a negative value, meaning that graduates' wages fall below those of a high-school degree holder, and sometimes below poverty level.[13] A study of outcomes of the schools that are the most driven by profit—those owned by private equity investing firms—found that private equity control of schools leads to "higher enrollment and profits, but also to lower education inputs, lower graduation rates, higher tuition, higher per-student debt, lower student loan repayment rates, and lower earnings among graduates."[14]

Highly visible scandals at for-profit colleges such ITT Tech and the University of Phoenix educated consumers and policymakers about the hazards of investor control of schools, and this increased scrutiny has contributed to a decline in enrollment at for-profit schools.[15]

But some for-profit executives have found a way to claim nonprofit status without adopting the nonprofit financial accountability that has largely prevented predatory practices at public and nonprofit schools. Companies that take this deceptive approach are getting away with it in growing numbers, racking up more fraud complaints than nonprofit schools not compromised by financial entanglements with former owners.[16]

Congress can address this problem of "covert for-profit" colleges by taking three steps:

+ Restoring the budget and vigor of the IRS's oversight of charities. For many decades, the IRS has been the lead agency policing the validity of claims of nonprofit control, with experienced staff who did detailed examinations of corporate governance and financial ties. Budget cuts by Congress, however, have practically eliminated the agency's enforcement capability, allowing covert for-profits to claim IRS approval.[17]

+ Tightening the requirements for a college to be considered a nonprofit by ensuring that the school's board has no financial interest in the school and is fully in control, not ceding power to an executive, contractor or landlord, as proposed here.[18]

+ Requiring that, when a college converts from for-profit to nonprofit, it goes through a rigorous review of the terms of the conversion, as proposed here.[19]

Valid public and nonprofit control of colleges has proven to be the most effective way to prevent them from taking unfair advantage of students and taxpayers, and to hold the colleges and their leaders accountable when they do. Preserving the integrity of nonprofit and public status is among the most important steps Congress could take to protect America's college students.

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Strengthening Health Care through the Public Option and Other Reforms

BY JEANNE LAMBREW

The passage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), and the thus-far mostly successful defense of it during the current administration, have guaranteed tens of millions of Americans with pre-existing conditions and financial hardship accessible, affordable health care. While Congress's first priority in this political moment remains preventing any further roll-back of the ACA, the goal of providing every American with affordable, quality health coverage requires additional legislation, and we must be ready to complete that promise when the opportunity arises.

That preparation has begun in earnest. TCF hosted a conference and special issue in partnership with *The American Prospect* at the beginning of the year to explore robust and wide-reaching ideas to build on public parts of the health coverage system.[1] In the 115th Congress, proposals to improve private insurance[2] as well as extend Medicare-like plans[3] to additional populations were introduced—which TCF has summarized in two easy-to-navigate tables. Short of replacing the current system with Medicare for All, proposals to expand public plans generally take one of four major approaches[4]:

> *1. Start where private insurance is hard to get.*
> Congress could triage the deployment of a public plan to help those who lack options today, requiring, for instance, that urban insurers serve nearby rural areas. It could, alternatively, extend Medicare's provider payment rates to private insurance plans in places with no or low competition.[5] A public plan, once it enters an area, runs the risk of making private insurers less likely to return, potentially replacing private with public plans one county at a time.
>
> *2. Reduce the Medicare age threshold.*
> A number of proposed reform plans support this tack, opening up Medicare to people younger than age sixty-five, because expanding a popular program may be the easiest way to expand government insurance.[6] Starting at age fifty aligns with AARP's new definition of "older Americans." Policy makers considering this approach have to decide whether coverage is more like what younger or older populations receive, how to finance such coverage, and whether adding new enrollees affects the benefits or costs for seniors on Medicare.
>
> *3. Go where the money is.*
> Now that the ACA has fully integrated people with pre-existing conditions into private plans, private insurance pays for more of the costs of the most expensive Americans than Medicare. Public reinsurance has become a popular, bipartisan idea to lower premiums and improve the functioning of the individual market. By reimbursing health insurers for high costs (for example, for organ transplants or treatment for hemophilia), reinsurance lowers cost uncertainty for insurers and thus the premiums they charge. As TCF has suggested, this approach could be extended to all private insurance, including that offered

through employers, and pay for those high claims at Medicare payment rates.[7] Congress could also eliminate Medicare's twenty-four-month waiting period for people with disabilities.[8]

4. Make public insurance an option for individuals and employers alongside private insurance.

This "choice"-based approach would appeal to many Americans since they would not be forced into a particular type of plan.[9] It could dispel myths about public plans and, if well designed, encourage competition with private plans. Policy makers would need tools such as risk adjustment and periodic recalibration of design features to prevent imbalance and an unstable insurance system, which is difficult in a politically polarized environment like we have now.

The odds that such ideas become law in the 116th Congress are low, but public-plan proposals will likely animate the campaign plans of progressive candidates running for the presidency in 2020. As a TCF review shows, presidents typically use their first 100 days to launch major legislative efforts and keep roughly two-thirds of campaign promises.[10] As such, new members of Congress could lay the groundwork for the next major round of health reform.

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Closing the Medicaid Coverage Gap

BY JEANNE LAMBREW AND JEN MISHORY

Fifty-three years ago, the Medicaid program was begun with the mission of providing "medical assistance to individuals whose income and resources are insufficient to meet the costs of necessary medical services."[1] This mission makes it one of our country's noblest and most essential endeavors: ensuring that vulnerable Americans don't get left behind when they're ill or hurt, and that they have what they need to stay healthy. It's our nation promising our poor that they deserve to be well, too.

However, Medicaid eligibility as originally designed was limited. It offered coverage to certain categories of individuals, such as pregnant women or the lowest-income families with dependent children, but did not reach all of those who can't afford health insurance on their own. To fill that gap, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) required that states expand Medicaid to all low-income individuals earning under 138 percent of the federal poverty level; all those above that threshold could receive refundable tax credits to purchase private coverage.[2]

In 2012, the Supreme Court ruled in *National Federation of Independent Businesses v. Sebelius*, on spurious rationale, that requiring states to expand Medicaid was unconstitutional—but states could choose to expand if they wanted. Thirty-three states plus the District of Columbia have acted to implement the Medicaid expansion.[3]

The Medicaid expansion has proven effective: states that have expanded have seen greater reductions in the number of uninsured, improved access to care, and an increase in treatment for behavioral health problems like opioid addiction, not to mention improved health outcomes, lower out-of-pocket expenses, lower debt collection, and more money for small and/or rural hospitals. Furthermore, no significant increase in state Medicaid spending, nor a decrease in education, transportation, or other state spending, has resulted from the expansion.[4]

Despite this track record, those seventeen states persist in their refusal, despite unprecedented federal financial support for the expansion—support that allows states to pay, at most, 10 percent of total costs of this coverage, an amount that may be less than what states already pay for programs for the uninsured. More than 2 million uninsured adults currently have too much income to qualify for Medicaid in their states, but too little to qualify for tax credits for Health Insurance Marketplace plans' premiums. People in this coverage gap in states that have rejected Medicaid expansion receive less health care overall, are saddled with greater medical bill debt, and have worse health outcomes.[5]

While this fall's elections may result in more states expanding Medicaid, Congress could act as well. We have identified five options to close the Medicaid gap[6] while following the Supreme Court's guidance in the *NFIB* case. Congress could:

1. Increase the federal funding available for the Medicaid expansion, asking states to chip in a smaller share of the cost than the current expansion provides; to entice states

to expand, link the ability of states to access new programs' funding, such as a block grant for opioid addiction treatment, to Medicaid expansion.

2. Allow cities or counties to expand Medicaid.

3. Make Medicaid adult coverage an "all or nothing" matter for states, giving them a choice: cover all low-income adults, including those without children not now eligible, or none. Declining would shift those currently covered non-disabled, non-elderly adults into a federally run program partly funded by the state.

4. Pull federal hospital funding ("DSH" payments) away from states' control when they refuse to expand Medicaid and send it directly to those states' hospitals.

5. Outright penalize non-expansion states, but at a level below the original ACA requirements that were deemed "coercive" by the Court.

These proposals to fill the Medicaid gap would help alleviate arguably the most acute barrier to access to care left in our health system. They could supplement more comprehensive proposals—such as those that expand public plan options—that include all uninsured Americans but may lack tailored benefits or financial assistance for poor adults. Moreover, beyond Medicaid's efficacy, the program is popular: 74 percent of Americans have a favorable view of it.[7] Given the health disparities between residents in states that have and have not expanded Medicaid, these and similar proposals should be aggressively explored.

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Protecting Workers by Strengthening the Right to Organize

BY RICHARD D. KAHLENBERG AND MOSHE MARVIT

In Dr. Martin Luther King's final march, on behalf of striking sanitation workers in Memphis, the civil rights leader's grace note was his belief that the advancement of economic justice and racial justice were inextricably intertwined. As he had previously told the AFL-CIO, "Our needs are identical with labor's needs: decent wages, fair working conditions, livable housing, old age security, health and welfare measures, conditions in which families can grow, have education for their children, and respect in the community. . . . The duality of interests of labor and Negroes makes any crisis which lacerates you a crisis from which we bleed." In his final Sunday sermon at the National Cathedral, Dr. King called his vision of economic justice nothing less than his "last, greatest dream."

Unfortunately for our country, Dr. King's final dream has still gone unfulfilled. While the Civil Rights Act in 1964, and its expansion in 1991, among other victories, have advanced racial justice by leaps and bounds, by contrast, since the 1960s, the American labor movement has seen enormous setbacks. Labor once dreamed that, with the vanquishing of Jim Crow, the racism that had kept working-class whites in the South from uniting with blacks would diminish and Southern states could be unionized; but organized labor did not conquer the South. Instead, to a significant degree, Southern anti-union practices have spread through much of the country. From its peak in the mid-1950s, organized labor has declined from more than one-third of private sector workers (and one-half of the industrial workforce) to less than one-tenth. Today, even public sector unionism is under attack in several states and from the U.S. Supreme Court. Meanwhile, economic inequality has skyrocketed to the point that the top 1 percent of Americans own more than the bottom 90 percent, and income from productivity gains have gone almost exclusively to the top 10 percent. Economists agree the two phenomena are connected, and that rising economic inequality in America is due in some significant measure to the weakness of the American labor movement.

A key difference between the two movements has been their degree of protection under federal law. Whereas the Civil Rights Act, under its 1991 amendment, includes the awarding of not only back pay but compensatory and punitive damages of up $300,000, as well as the opportunity for legal discovery and access to jury trials for racial discrimination in the workplace, the National Labor Relations Act of 1935 (NLRA) has proven largely ineffectual in protecting workers from being disciplined or fired for trying to organize a union. Under the NLRA, processes of enforcement are lengthy and arduous; opportunity for discovery is extremely limited; and jury trials are not an option. Faced with the prospect of having to negotiate substantial wage and benefit increases with a union, businesses have a strong financial incentive to fire organizing employees and risk paying the penalties as a cost of doing business. Labor lawyer Thomas Geoghegan writes in his 1991 book, *Which Side Are You On?*: "An employer who didn't break the law would have to be what economists call an 'irrational firm.'"

To adequately defend labor organizing and the dignity of work, Congress should extend significant protections—modeled after those in the Civil Rights Act described above—to workers attacked for organizing. Such a law would not only give workers a private right of action to collect damages—it could also spawn a cultural shift in employer behavior. Employers who are found guilty of racial or gender discrimination are today seen to have done something shameful, a seismic shift from the days when some business routinely discriminated based on race or national origin. Modeling labor organizing protections after civil rights legislation could, over time, bring about a cultural shift in which the country sees corporations that fire employees for trying to form a union, join the middle class, and have a say in the workplace, as morally suspect—as they already are seen in Europe.

Americans long to be part of something larger than themselves, and just as promoters of equal educational opportunity and a cleaner environment have characterized their causes as part of this generation's civil rights Movement, so labor organizing—which shares with the civil rights movement the basic quest for human dignity—has a very strong claim to that mantle. In Memphis, Martin Luther King understood that the fate of the labor movement and the civil rights community were inextricably bound. Now is the time to give organized labor the same protections found in the Civil Rights Act itself.

Notes

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Strengthening Child Care Support for Working Families

BY JULIE KASHEN

Parents, no matter their income level, want the very best for their children, which includes having child care they can trust. In 2016, nearly 2 million parents of young children had to quit a job, turn down a new job, or change jobs because of problems with child care.[1] Ensuring that families can afford quality child care and early education now will make a huge difference in their economic security for years to come. That includes making sure that child care workers can also afford care for their own children, as they are some of the lowest-paid people working in the U.S. today.

In addition, studies have found that the first five years of children's lives are critical to their ability to learn social and emotional skills, as well as for setting them up to be good students and citizens later in life.[2] All children deserve the opportunity to succeed, which includes ensuring they are cared for in safe, nurturing, educational environments.

Even in the challenging environment of the current Congress, this issue has become a priority. Over the past year, advocates have achieved unprecedented progress on child care and early education. Last spring, Congress supported historic increases in federal child care and early education funding for 2018.[3] This fall, the FY19 spending bill, which received bipartisan support, included a further increase of $560 million for child care and early education programs.[4] And new public opinion data released earlier this month showed that 77 percent of voters support congressional action to increase child care assistance and expand early education.[5]

As the next Congress sets its priorities, expanding support for parents and children should be high on the list. Fortunately, there are blueprints for doing just that in legislation that has already been introduced.

The Child Care for Working Families Act, introduced by Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) and Representative Bobby Scott (D-VA) in fall 2017, offers a promising pathway to better child care policies. It would provide direct financial assistance for child care and early learning expenses on a sliding scale to working parents based on their income. It would also increase pay for child care teachers and caregivers, which will in turn improve the quality of care. Parents would be able to send their children to the high quality child care option of their choice, in a center, a family's home, or an after school program. Child care assistance would be available when parents need it—including evenings and weekends—to accommodate their work schedules, and where they need it—including an expansion of high quality options in areas that don't have them today. The bill also expands public preschool to three- and four-year-olds nationwide. It helps states and local communities build better preschool services for parents and makes them more accessible to children from low- and middle-income families.

Congress should continue to prioritize funding for child care and early education and put the Child Care for Working Families Act front and center on its 2019 agenda.

Notes

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Providing Paid Leave for Family Caregiving

BY JULIE KASHEN

"At some point, every single person... is going to have to care for a family member or themselves. And no working American should ever have to choose between their families and their paycheck," Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) told the Senate Finance Subcommittee on on Social Security, Pensions and Family Policy in July.[1]

Senator Gillibrand, along with Representative Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) has introduced the FAMILY Act (S. 337[2]/H.R. 947[3]) to make sure that parents can be home when a new baby is born or a child is adopted; be with their spouse who gets cancer, or elderly parent who is hospitalized; or address their own serious illness without worrying about their economic stability. Today, 83 percent of people in the United States do not have this right to paid family leave from their employers.[4] As discussed in the TCF report "Tech Companies Are Leading the Way on Paid Family Leave," the FAMILY Act would create a national paid family and medical leave program to provide individuals with twelve weeks of partial income when they take time off for the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) purposes mentioned above.[5] The bill ensures that no one need risk losing a much-needed paycheck by taking time to care for family or themselves. It should be a priority for the 116th Congress.

The next Congress also has the opportunity to improve on the bill. As states around the nation have enacted paid family and medical leave laws, policy makers and advocates are learning valuable lessons about what works, and what's possible. For example, the newer laws in Washington, D.C., Washington State, and Massachusetts include progressive wage replacement, where people with lower wages who are already struggling to get by will be able to receive a higher proportion of those wages during time at home with their new baby or sick family member.[6] In Massachusetts and New York, all workers who take paid time to care will have job protection—the guarantee they can return to work in the same or an equivalent job.[7] States have also adopted more expansive definitions of family than what is in the FAMILY Act,[8] including siblings, grandparents, domestic partners, and in-laws, and have been including provisions like hours-based accrual, flexible eligibility requirements, and coverage for those who are not categorized as employees to ensure that nonstandard workers are covered.[9]

Among states that offer family leave, none provide more than twelve weeks; yet some private companies are offering sixteen, eighteen, or even fifty-two weeks of leave.[10] Policy makers have the opportunity to learn from them and consider a longer leave duration.

At the same time, policy makers should not give up retirement security for paid leave, as has been proposed by Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL).[11] In the TCF commentary "Paid Family Leave Should Not Come at the Expense of Retirement," we explained: "This proposal would redirect Social Security retirement benefits for paid leave without new funding for those who choose to make the trade-off. Parents should not be made to choose between the two."[12]

When people need the peace of mind of sufficient guaranteed paid job-protected time to care, they should have it. The next Congress has an opportunity to make this a reality.

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Ensuring Equity in Housing through an Economic Fair Housing Act

BY RICHARD D. KAHLENBERG

Fifty years ago, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed into law the Fair Housing Act, advancing human freedom by outlawing racial discrimination in the sale and rental of housing. This was one of the cornerstone achievements of the civil rights movement, asserting our government's commitment to ending racism even in that most personal of domains, the home. But while a cornerstone, the act needs to be built upon before the work of ending discrimination is done: in particular, by addressing the increasing prevalence of exclusionary zoning policies across the country.[1]

Exclusionary zoning, also known as "snob" zoning, limits housing to single-family homes in certain neighborhoods, often with minimum lot sizes, thereby promoting segregation by income as well as by race. Bans on apartment buildings and other multi-family units effectively exclude low-income and minority children from many high-performing school districts. By artificially limiting the supply of units, these discriminatory ordinances also are helping to feed what the Urban Institute has called the worst affordable housing crisis America has seen in decades. For eighty years, since passage of the United States National Housing Act of 1937, public policy has suggested that families should spend no more than 30 percent of their pre-tax income on housing. Yet, according to a 2017 report of Harvard's Joint Center for Housing Studies, 33 percent of American renters and homeowners pay more than that.[2] Renters are particularly stretched. Nearly half of all renters (21 million Americans) spend more than 30 percent on housing. In fact, about a quarter of renters in the United States (about 11 million families) spend ***more than half*** of their incomes on housing needs. Overall, home prices have been rising twice as fast as wages.

These zoning ordinances not only hurt individuals: they also hurt the economy as a whole. As decades of research has found, where people live affects their access to employment opportunities, good schools, transportation, and decent health care. With mobility and access to opportunity so limited, our country cannot possibly perform at its full potential.

Snob zoning policies need to go. With them gone, the way will be cleared for denser housing wherever it is needed, which is not only cheaper for consumers because of increased supply, but also cheaper in terms of land, construction, and infrastructure. As writer Brent Toderian notes, "Not all dense housing is affordable, but all affordable housing is dense."[3] Right-leaning economists such as Edward Glaeser of Harvard and the Manhattan Institute and Joseph Gyourko of the Wharton School also support doing away with exclusionary zoning, the latter of which estimates that excessive zoning has pushed real house prices a staggering 56 percent above real construction costs.[4] The result of eliminating these ordinances would be to simply allow housing full play in the market. Millions of Americans who are now shut out of the housing market by artificially high prices would benefit.

Congress can bring these Americans the relief they need by updating the Fair Housing Act into an Economic Fair Housing Act that curtails exclusionary zoning nationwide. State-level movements have helped to illuminate the way, in particular in

Massachusetts (SB 81), Washington (Seattle's Housing and Livability Agenda), and California (SB 827), where advocates have made real progress towards getting anti-exclusionary zoning legislation passed. While the Trump administration's suspension of the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing Rule has been a setback, in general there is even conservative support, and new evidence suggests that homeowners may have loosened their iron grip on public policy decisions: recently, the cap on the mortgage interest deduction was lowered from $1 million to $750,000 mortgages; and the ability to deduct property taxes, previously unlimited, was capped at $10,0000. These longtime subsidies for upper-middle-class homeowners, the *Washington Post* noted, were "once thought untouchable."[5]

The time is now to finish the work begun by the civil rights movement fifty years ago and expand the Fair Housing Act's protections. By including income equity into the legislation, both racial and economic justice will win the day at home.

Notes

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Assisting Workers Facing Technology-Related Job Loss

BY ANDREW STETTNER

Our country prides itself on striving to give everyone in America an equal opportunity at making a living for themselves and their families, in a way that matches their skills and interests to the needs of the economy and nation. But one of the nation's greatest strengths in fulfilling that promise—technological progress—is also proving to be one of the greatest challenges. Rapid advances in computing power and technologies like artificial intelligence are fundamentally changing the ways in which Americans work, and are threatening millions of Americans with job loss through no fault of their own. Just as the impact of deindustrialization in the wake of expanded free trade with China and Mexico has upended the U.S. economy and politics, failing to prepare for the impact of new technologies on workers could have historic social impacts.

While the number of jobs that could be lost is not precisely known, the impact of automation is anticipated to be quite severe. Economists from the McKinsey Institute estimate that twenty-six percent of jobs had more than 70 percent of tasks at risk of automation.[1] A recent OECD report found one in ten U.S. jobs were at high risk of being replaced by technology.[2] Add to the mix the difficulty of completely switching careers later in life, it's clear that, just as we must continue to nurture our country's role as a leader in technology, we must also provide adequate support to Americans whose lives and livelihoods are displaced by technological progress.[3]

A thoughtful policy response to assuage the effects of technology-related job loss should include providing retraining, extended income support, case management, health care protection, wage insurance, and relocation assistance. As luck would have it, an existing program, the trade adjustment assistance (TAA) program, is already well-positioned to step in and provide this response.[4] Its constellation of services, including most of the facets mentioned above, addresses the fact that a lack of income support is one of the main reasons unemployed workers cannot complete training: the basic twenty-six weeks of unemployment benefits simply isn't enough time for most workers to find, enroll in, and complete a meaningful training course. TAA allows for a wide variety of training options, spanning from classroom training to apprenticeship—and it is one of the only retraining programs that would provide long enough retraining for a dislocated worker to claim a post-secondary credential.[5] While some have criticized TAA, the fact is that employment placement and training completion rates come out higher than those of the WIOA displaced worker program.

We propose properly funding the TAA and improving some of its key benefits—including wage insurance and training waivers—as well as making the process for certifying one's occupation easier, improving notifications to workers whose roles may be at risk, and prioritizing on-the-job training and apprenticeships, among other improvements. Then, by adding an extra "T"—technology—to TAA, we recommend expanding certification to cover technology-related job loss as a type, tailoring services towards resiliency in those industries currently experiencing or prone to technology-related change.[6] One key measure in this extension of services would be to pre-certify at-risk occupations, to ensure that responses are timely. In terms of funding, the TAA program is already being funded out of general revenue; a revamped TTAA could add a value-added tax as well as taxes on technology that impacts occupational stability, for instance a vehicle-miles tax for self-driving cars.[7] This reform should be done as part of a larger reform of the TAA program that would streamline access to trade impacted workers, improve the delivery of case management and employment services, and ensure that more workers enter into training programs that lead to jobs in those fields. The upcoming debate over the new U.S. Mexico Canada Trade Agreement (the proposed successor to NAFTA) provides a key opportunity to also revisit this critical program.

In our country's sky-high course as the world leader in nearly every field of technological development, we must guard against leaving behind the American workers who make that leadership possible. A properly funded and equipped TTAA program would go a long way towards ensuring that we all move forward as leaders together.

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Addressing Child Poverty through an Expanded Child Tax Credit

BY ANDREW STETTNER

Growing up in poverty, especially in an advanced economy like ours, is a significant tragedy. No child should have to go without the necessities of sufficient shelter, nourishment, and opportunity to make a meaningful life for themselves. For this reason our country, in particular since the 1960s, has fought mightily to eliminate child poverty once and for all, instituting programs like the Earned Income Tax Credit, Children's Health Insurance, food stamps, and Head Start—lifting millions of kids out of destitution along the way.[1] Yet many of those measures have either halted or eroded, and child poverty remains far from over. With children more vulnerable to poverty than any other group of Americans, and U.S. child poverty worse than all but four of thirty-seven major industrialized nations, the time is certainly now for action on child poverty.[2]

Leading poverty researchers have coalesced around the key missing link in the U.S. anti-poverty strategy: a modest $2,500 to $3,000 per year, per child cash allowance to families raising children.[3] Such child allowances are a central part of poverty fighting strategies across the world, and a child allowance was a major part of the child poverty campaign in Britain that cut child poverty by half in ten years.[4] The closest thing in the United States to a child allowance is the Child Tax Credit. Here's how it works: tax filers are eligible for up to $2,000 per child, and the credit is partially refundable, meaning that even workers who do not owe any taxes to the federal government can receive funds back from the government. TCF's research has found that the child tax credit alone lifts 1.7 million children out of poverty, and contributes to better health and school performance.[5]

A Child Tax Credit is in place, but it doesn't do enough for low-income families. For example, families need to earn $2,500 per year to get any help from the Child Tax Credit, and then only get 15 cents for each additional dollar they earn. As a result, the credit pays little to the very poorest families and has little impact on deep poverty (families earning less than half the poverty rate).[6] Despite much fanfare about the child tax credit, this past winter's tax bill did little to improve the situation. While the nonrefundable credit was doubled to $2,000 per child, only $400 of that increase applied to the refundable credit and families still get none of the credit for their first $2,500 in earnings. As a result, 27 million kids are part of families that won't get the full child tax credit increase,[7] and the tax bill completely eliminated access to the child tax credit among 1 million immigrant children whose working parents lack a social security number.[8]

Congress is uniquely positioned to change this policy, and there already exists bipartisan support to do so.[9] From the left, Senators Michael Bennet and Sherrod Brown have proposed to more than triple the size of the tax credit, increase the benefit awarded, and make the credit fully refundable.[10] Their bill embodies the research-based child allowance proposed by The Century Foundation and other leading policy researchers, and would bring the United States in line with Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and other leading nations. It is estimated that this bill would cut child poverty in half and eliminate extreme poverty (children in families surviving on less than $1 cash per day). On the right, Senators Marco Rubio and Mike Lee had proposed to improve on the existing CTC by making it partially refundable at the first dollar of earnings but all of their ideas did not make into the final tax bill; conservative thinkers at the Institute of Family Studies, the Family Research Council, and others have argued that a more robust child credit would encourage marriage and family formation.[11] As Congress considers whether to modify or extend tax cuts enacted in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, a top priority should be to bring the child tax credit up to the level proposed by Bennett and Brown (and Rep. Rosa Delauro and many House co-sponsors). At the very least, Congress should increase the refundable child tax credit from $1,400 to $2,000, in line with the non-refundable credit and allow workers to start earning that credit on their first day of work.[12]

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Promoting High-Wage Jobs by Revitalizing Our Manufacturing Communities

BY ANDREW STETTNER

Family-supporting manufacturing jobs were a mainstay of the American middle class in the twentieth century. The sharp decline of manufacturing work—a loss of 5.7 million jobs in the decade from 2000 to 2010—has accelerated the erosion of the middle class, especially in hard-hit Midwest communities, from Pennsylvania to Wisconsin, that lost 36 percent of their jobs over that period.[1] Manufacturing still matters to these heartland communities, where 1 in 4 private sector jobs still reside in factories.[2]

The good news is that manufacturing is making a comeback: the sector has added back 1.26 million jobs since 2010.[3] But, there's more work to be done. The United States is still suffering from atrophied critical manufacturing capacities that are undermining both our national security[4] and our ability to be world leaders in environmental sustainability.[5] Much more needs to be done to recruit young people, women (who only represent 7 percent of middle skill factory jobs),[6] and people of color to the reviving sector's boom of new jobs. While there are a variety of factors in the lack of draw to these jobs—including drops in unionization and the increased use of temporary labor—it's also the case that manufacturing pays 10 percent more than other similar work,[7] and stereotypes and misinformation about these jobs might be keeping away workers who would want and need them.

While Congress has made a number of important investments in the competitiveness of the manufacturing sector, most notably the Revitalizing America Manufacturing and Innovation Act of 2014,[8] our investments pale in comparison to international competitors such as China and Germany (which maintains 20 percent of its GDP in manufacturing, compared to 11 percent in the United States).[9] The next Congress represents an ideal moment to seize on the momentum to help communities build a more a competitive, high-wage, and sustainable manufacturing sector in their community.

For the past year, The Century Foundation's High Wage America project toured Midwest manufacturing communities to have conversations about what our nation's next steps in the sector should be. We found these communities shaking off their Rust Belt image and embracing high-tech advanced manufacturing, as Cleveland's ArcelorMittal steel mill (the first in the world to produce a ton of steel in a single man-hour) has done. These communities are transforming by turning away from the old, ineffective tactic of throwing large tax giveaways to lure factories from other states. Our summits across the Midwest, culminating in a national conference in Washington, D.C., highlighted many of these tactics, as well as what the federal government can do[10] to support them.

Congress's role in this is crucial. While so much is needed, to get started, Congress should take these three steps:

+ Catalyze deeper partnerships targeting strategic advanced manufacturing clusters by appropriating $30 million dollars to the newly authorized Defense Manufacturing Community Partnerships Support Program. This new initiative is based on a successful 2012

Department of Commerce pilot which provided technical assistance to designated communities bringing in new federal resources for infrastructure and job training.[11]

+ Attract more young people, people of color, women, and skilled workers into manufacturing by grantinga $100 million to fund thirty communities across the nation to develop innovative education efforts. This would accelerate current federal efforts on the behalf of career awareness and preparation, such as the Carl Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, to draw the people needed to fill sectoral hiring demand that hasn't been seen in a generation. The 2014 Youth Career Connect grant program and proposals like the PARTNERS Act and the Gateways to Careers Act provide excellent models.[12]

+ Improve the implementation of the layoff aversion provisions of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). WIOA requires states to use a portion of their funding to prevent layoffs through measures like finding new markets, business consulting, identifying new owners or investors, and retraining incumbent workers. But implementation has been highly uneven, and WIOA appropriations should require the administration to work with states to bolster these services.[13]

Our nation has the seeds of a real renaissance in our past status as a high-tech manufacturing powerhouse. If we take these steps to support traditional manufacturing communities in our heartland, all Americans will benefit

Notes

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Saving the 2020 Census and Defending Vulnerable Communities

BY SAM ADLER-BELL

Business, civil rights, and advocacy stakeholders have been warning for years that the 2020 Census faces serious challenges: delayed funding, a leadership vacuum, technical unpreparedness for the nation's first "high-tech" Census, and widespread fear and distrust of the federal government among Census respondents—not just undocumented immigrants, but also rural and native communities, African Americans, and others.[1]

Those challenges were amplified in March 2018 by the Trump administration's decision to add a citizenship question to the 2020 Census questionnaire. In a March 2018 memo explaining the decision, Commerce secretary Wilbur Ross said the Bureau was adding the query in response to a December 2017 request from the Department of Justice (DOJ)—who needed the data, DOJ said, to better enforce protections for minority voters under the Voting Rights Act (VRA).

That justification has been disputed by voting rights experts[2] and former civil rights enforcers[3] at the Justice Department. Furthermore, emails released as part of an ongoing lawsuit against the Commerce Department has shown that, contrary to his congressional testimony, Secretary Ross discussed adding the question with Trump officials—including Steve Bannon and Kris Kobach—within months of Trump's inauguration, well before the DOJ request.

While the Trump administration's reasoning remains murky,[4] the likely effect of a citizenship question is much more clear: an inaccurate 2020 Census. Six former Census directors from both Republican and Democratic administrations warned in a January 26 letter[5] to Secretary Ross, "we believe that adding a citizenship question to the 2020 Census will considerably increase the risks to the 2020 enumeration." In a 2015 amicus brief[6] before the Supreme Court, four of those former directors stated, "the sum effect [of a citizenship question] would be bad census data. And any effort to correct for the data would be futile." An analysis by the Census Bureau's own chief scientist[7] warned that asking about citizenship in the 2020 Census would be "very costly, harms the quality of the census count, and would use substantially less accurate citizenship status data than are available" from other federal records.

The harms of an inaccurate Census would be disproportionately born by those communities that, historically, are undercounted: communities of color,[8] remote rural areas,[9] native communities,[10] children under the age of five,[11] and, of course, immigrants. Qualitative research conducted by the Census Bureau itself in 2017 found "an unprecedented ground swell in confidentiality and data sharing concerns, particularly among immigrants or those who live with immigrants."

The importance of accurate Census data cannot be overstated. The decennial count of every man, woman, and child in America is a mammoth civic undertaking, with profound consequences for the distribution of political and economic power. Congress allocates $675 billion in annual federal funds on the basis of Census data.[12] Medicaid distributes $312 billion; SNAP, a nutritional assistance program, distributes $69.5 billion; Medicare

Part B distributes $64.2 billion; and Section 8 housing distributes $38.3 billion.[13] Businesses, chambers of commerce, and trade associations also rely on accurate Census data for economic development, business decisions, and strategic planning.[14]

Finally, because Census data is used to draw local, state, and congressional legislative districts, an undercount among poor, rural, and minority populations risks accelerating the disenfranchisement of already marginalized communities.

For all these reasons, eliminating an untested and likely destructive citizenship question from the 2020 Census should be a priority for Congress in 2019.

While many stakeholders hope that one of the six lawsuits[15] challenging the citizenship question will result in forcing the administration to abandon its plan—especially the New York one set to go to trial November 5—we cannot assume the judiciary will solve this problem, especially not before Census forms must begin to be printed in the first half of 2019.

Congress can act to prevent the citizenship question from derailing the 2020 Census. Here's how:

+ Add language to appropriations bills prohibiting funding for printing the decennial questionnaire if it includes the citizenship question.[16]

+ Call for hearings in the House Oversight and Government Reform and Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committees to investigate whether political considerations were improperly injected into the 2020 Census process by members of the Trump administration.

+ Call for a hearing in the House Oversight and Government Reform and Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committees at which Secretary Wilbur Ross can explain his misleading testimony about the administration's reasoning for adding the citizenship question.

Immigrants and their families are part of our communities and local and regional economies. Including a citizenship question on the 2020 Census will compromise important data about this segment of American society. An undercount in areas with high numbers of immigrants would also redistribute federal resources and representation away from those communities. The end result would hurt not only immigrants, but also anyone who relies on an accurate Census.

Notes

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Ending U.S. Military Support for the War in Yemen

BY THANASSIS CAMBANIS AND MICHAEL WAHID HANNA

America has always prided itself on a foreign policy that promotes values along with core national interests. We support our close allies in many ways, including weapons contracts and military–military cooperation. Military aid and weapons sales are but one tool in our kit, which we use to reward cooperative allies and secure for the United States some influence over the security policy of those allies. Military aid, especially in times of conflict, is supposed to promote security and stability—a core U.S. national security interest.

Unfortunately, Saudi Arabia—one of America's critical Arab partners—has strained this compact far past its natural breaking point. The United States agreed to a Saudi-led military campaign in Yemen three years ago on premises that turned out not to be true. The war against Yemen's Houthis was supposed to be short and decisive, dealing a setback to Iranian expansionism while keeping in check the terrorist threat posed by Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. Instead, today the Houthis are more closely aligned with Iran than before the war. Al Qaeda is stronger than ever in Yemen. And America is deeply implicated in a careless campaign that has destroyed countless human lives.

Our complicity in a disastrous Saudi-led war in Yemen has driven us dangerously far from our bedrock interests of stability and balance in Arabian peninsula, one of the world's most important source of oil and natural gas.

One of our top priorities should be to disentangle the United States from the disastrous Saudi-led war in Yemen—an initiative already supported by a bipartisan group of lawmakers.[1] American policy in the Gulf cannot be subsidiary to weapons sales: major contracts must be reassessed so that they serve American policy interests, rather than drive them. Furthermore, a principled and strategically sound recalibration on Yemen can spur an even more important process: the revival of congressional oversight of America's wars. It's time to begin reversing the militarization of foreign policy and rethinking the logic of America's reflexive and unconstrained global war on terror.

United States' assistance to the Saudi-led coalition primarily consists of aerial targeting assistance, intelligence sharing, and regular refueling of Saudi and UAE aircraft.[2] However, the United States has also provided much of the coalition's military equipment. Under the Obama administration, the United States agreed to sell approximately $112 billion worth of military equipment—including aircraft, helicopters, and air defense missiles—to Saudi Arabia.[3]

Congress can and should pass resolutions against the existing arms contracts connected to the war, and it can demand that the administration provide compelling national security arguments to continue any sales. For instance, the administration could easily convince Congress to approve sales of defensive weaponry, like anti-missile batteries that could protect Saudi Arabia from Houthi Scud missiles. Furthermore, Congress can and should demand that the administration fulfill its existing reporting requirements. Members of Congress have asked tough direct questions that the Pentagon can answer about the impact of

American refueling, and the nature and impact of targeting intelligence.

Those measures alone, however, will not be enough. Congress ought to write new legislation that imposes far more substantive reporting and certification obligations on the administration. Legislation with more teeth would make it much harder for the administration to treat certification as a hollow pro forma exercise. Such legislation should not allow for national security waivers, which in the past have been used by administrations to sidestep Congressional oversight. Tougher legislation would also suspend ongoing sales if the administration does not actively fulfil its reporting requirements.

The Pentagon has an affirmative obligation to prove that its actions are fulfilling the United States' stated aims—in the case of the Yemen War, that U.S. actions are advancing strategic aims and reducing civilian casualties. Right now, the opposite is true; American complicity in Yemen is eroding American stature and policy goals. Ending American complicity will not only contribute to ending the tragedy in Yemen: it will realign our policy practice with our strategic goals. The moral and strategic benefits are clear.

Notes

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