

Cornell Roosevelt Institute

ROOSEVELT REVIEW

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Letter from the Senior Policy Chairman

Dear reader,

It has been an exciting semester here at the Cornell University Chapter of the Roosevelt Institute, and I am proud to present the twelfth issue of the *Cornell University Roosevelt Review*.

At Cornell Roosevelt, we celebrate diverse perspectives and seek to inspire a wide range of ideas. Our Policy Analysts come from different countries, political backgrounds, and colleges across Cornell. Each week, we discuss any topic from sustainable infrastructure to gun policy. While we are not all experts in every policy field, our meetings are incredible learning opportunities because analysts across centers share with one another their niche knowledge. We are further able to bolster this learning through conversations with guest speakers, panel discussions in collaboration with other organizations at Cornell, and advocacy events that support and realize analysts' policy interests.

Cornell Roosevelt does not only seek to inspire innovative change internally; we recognize our presence within Cornell and Ithaca-at-large and make every effort to engage with our community. This past semester, we focused our efforts on local housing issues. We held an affordable housing panel during which we heard from the Cornell Off-Campus Housing Director, a representative of a local non-profit that tackles affordable housing, and the founder and president of a non-profit that helps homeless members of the Ithaca community find housing. As a result of this panel, we are taking action through a "Know Your Rights" information dissemination campaign to encourage Cornell students and Ithaca community members to learn about their rights as tenants.

I am also very proud to announce that we are expanding our global presence. This semester, Cornell Roosevelt Institute was recognized as one of the leading student policy think-tanks when we were asked to be a founding member of the Global Student Policy Alliance, the only existing international student think-tank coalition. Through GSPA, Cornell Roosevelt joins universities across the world such as the University of Cambridge, Kings' College, and the University of Chicago to build bridges, broaden our network of field experts by increasing connections with professors and students, and develop creative and far-reaching policy. We are excited to see where this opportunity will take us.

This publication comes as a result of a semester of dedicated learning, rigorous research, and diligent editing by our Policy Analysts and Center Directors. I hope you enjoy reading the final product as much as we enjoyed putting it together.

Liel Sterling
Senior Policy Chairman, 2019

2018, 2019 EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS

Stephannie Chen '19, *President (2018), Strategic Adviser (2019)*

Stephannie is a senior in the School of Industrial and Labor Relations, minoring in Economics and Business. Prior to serving as President, Stephannie was a policy analyst in the Education policy center and served as Programming Director and interim Senior Policy Chairman. Outside of Roosevelt, she conducts research on teacher attraction in public schools and volunteers with a first grade class at Fall Creek Elementary School. She plans on attending law school after graduation.

Emmy Chen '20, *Senior Policy Chairman (2018), President (2019)*

Emmy Chen is a junior in the College of Arts and Sciences majoring in Government and minoring in Inequality Studies, Public Policy, and Information Science. Her main areas of interest are human and civil rights, specifically in studying gender-based violence and discrimination, as well as how social institutions and processes exacerbate inequities in outcome. She is pursuing a career in human rights law and public policy after graduation. Emmy has previously conducted research on childhood sexual assault disclosure and the rape-kit testing backlog. She has also led double project research teams analyzing the US think tank and policy landscape with the Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program. At Cornell, she is also a board member of the university's chapter of the Phi Alpha Delta pre-law organization, a Cayuga's Watcher, and a member of Consent Ed.

Liel Sterling '21, *Advocacy Director (2018), Senior Policy Chairman (2019)*

Liel is a sophomore in the College of Industrial and Labor Relations. Apart from serving as the Roosevelt Institute's Advocacy Director, Liel is a Cornell Meinig Family National Scholar, the Co-President of the Cornell chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, and the Vice President of Philanthropy for Kappa Alpha Pi Pre-Law Fraternity. Liel loves her home-state of NJ and has interned for three NJ Politicians including NJ State Senate Majority Leader Loretta Weinberg, US Congressman Bill Pascrell Jr., and US Senator Cory A. Booker.

Giancarlo Valdetaro '21, *Director of Internal Relations (2018), Director of External Relations (2019)*

Giancarlo is a sophomore in the College of Arts and Sciences majoring in Government and History, and planning to minor in Public Policy, Inequality Studies, and Law and Society. He joined the Roosevelt Institute last semester, in which time he was not only able to help organize Cornell's March for Our Lives, but also organize CRI's Gun Policy Forum. Outside of Roosevelt Institute, he researches 19th century civil rights with Professor Bateman in the Government department, and is a member of the Cornell Political Union and the Cornell Symphonic Orchestra. This past summer he worked on two different congressional campaigns in his home district, VA-10, and is looking forward to election results this November, and the beginning of the discussions about 2020.

Samara Jacobson '20, *Communications Director (2018), Director of Internal Relations (2019)*

Samara is a junior majoring in Industrial and Labor Relations with minors in Information Science and Business. Outside of Roosevelt, Samara is an editor at Ezra's Archives and House Manager of her social sorority. She also conducts research on the use of mediation and arbitration to resolve workplace conflict. Last summer, Samara studied abroad in Beijing, China to gain a special knowledge of Chinese labor issues.

Nikhil Dhingra '20, *Programming Director (2018)*

Nikhil is a junior in the ILR School. He is a member of the Rawlings Presidential Scholars program, using grant money to conduct research on sanctuary city policies with Professor Shannon Gleeson within ILR. Outside of the classroom, Nikhil serves as the Committee Co-Chair for the Community Service Committee within ILR Student Government, writes for the Cornell Business Review, and is an active brother of Phi Alpha Delta pre-law fraternity. In his free time, Nikhil enjoys reading and playing basketball.

Daniel Bromberg '20, *New Analyst Director (2018)*

Daniel Bromberg is a junior in the ILR School with a minor in Russian. Daniel is interested in labor policy, with emphasis on the changing rights of workers to organize and collectively bargain, and in policy governing LGBTQIA+ rights in the workplace. On campus, Daniel is involved as a Worker Institute Fellow. This summer he will intern in the NYC Office of Collective Bargaining.

Matthew D'Ambrosio '20, *Communications Director (2019)*

Matt D'Ambrosio is a member of the CALS class of 2020 and is majoring in Environmental and Sustainability Sciences. He has a particular interest in wildlife and conservation. He will pursue a career environmental governance or environmental journalism after graduating. Along with the Roosevelt Institute, Matt writes for the campus humor magazine *The Cornell Lunatic* where he is the incoming Executive-Editor. He is also involved with Cornell Political Union and works in the Sparks Stable Isotope Lab in Corson-Mudd. This past January he travelled to the Dominican Republic where he participated in a field research project, and he plans to return home to Long Island this summer.

Bennett Sherr '21, *Advocacy Director (2019)*

Bennett Sherr is a transfer sophomore in the College of Industrial and Labor Relations and is pursuing an additional minor in LGBT Studies. He joined the Roosevelt institute in the fall of 2018. Aside from the Cornell University Roosevelt Institute, Bennett is an active member of the Cornell University American Civil Liberties Union, Phi Alpha Delta (Cornell's largest pre-law fraternity), and is a member of Cornell's Varsity Table Tennis Team. Away from Cornell, Bennett resides in Princeton, NJ. Both on campus and off, Bennett is extremely active in social justice and advocacy. He is currently a member of the Trevor Projects Youth Ambassador Council and was the 2015 winner of the VSA Youth Playwright Discovery Award (a national playwriting competition run out of the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC). His play *Mutant Boy* was performed on the Kennedy Center's Millennium Stage.

Samantha Lustig '21, *New Analyst Director (2019)*

Samantha Lustig is a sophomore in the ILR school from New York City. She is pursuing minors in Spanish and Information Science. Some of her policy interests include criminal justice, voting rights, and the intersection of disability and employment. In addition to her involvement in the Roosevelt Institute, she is the chair of the Cornell Student Assembly's City and Local Affairs Committee, a member of the Cornell ACLU Chapter, and a practicing 2nd degree black belt in taekwondo. Samantha has previously interned with Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer and New York City Councilwoman Helen Rosenthal. She will be spending the upcoming summer working on policy research in Zambia. Samantha hopes to pursue a career in law in the future.

Domestic Policy

(Domestic Policy Proposal to be included in the following volume of Roosevelt Review)

Director: Samantha Lustig

Analysts: Lindsey Dahms-Nolan, Jackson Ross-Pilkington, Stella Linardi, David Leynov, Shraddha Harshvardhan

Samantha Lustig '21

Director of the Center for Domestic Policy

Samantha Lustig is a sophomore in the ILR school from New York City. She is pursuing minors in Spanish and Information Science. Some of her policy interests include criminal justice, voting rights, and the intersection of disability and employment. In addition to her involvement in the Roosevelt Institute, she is the chair of the Cornell Student Assembly's City and Local Affairs Committee, a member of the Cornell ACLU Chapter, and a practicing 2nd degree black belt in taekwondo. Samantha has previously interned with Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer and New York City Councilwoman Helen Rosenthal. She will be spending the upcoming summer working on policy research in Zambia. Samantha hopes to pursue a career in law in the future.

Lindsey Dahms-Nolan

Lindsey Dahms is a sophomore in the ILR School with perspective minors in law and society, inequality studies, and feminist, gender, and sexuality studies. Outside of her involvement in the Roosevelt Institute's Domestic Policy Center, Lindsey is heavily involved in Cornell's Speech and Debate Society as a member of the policy team. Lindsey's primary academic interests relate to immigration and legal reform.

Jackson Ross-Pilkington

Jack Ross-Pilkington is a sophomore student in the School of Industrial and Labor Relations. Outside of the Roosevelt Institute, he serves as the Political Director of the College Democrats of New York, the Co-President of the Cornell University American Civil Liberties Union and the Communications Director of the Cornell University. In the future, he plans to go to law school and possibly run for office.

Stella Linardi

Stella Linardi is currently a first-year student majoring in Industrial and Labor Relations and pursuing minors in Inequality Studies, Law and Society, and Business. Outside of the Roosevelt Institute, she is involved in the Cornell University American Civil Liberties Union and the Cornell DREAM TEAM. Stella has previously interned for Senior Deputy Fern Carasquillo at the California Department of Labor Office in Long Beach, and plans to intern for Senator Kamala Harris at her Congressional Office in Los Angeles this summer.

David Leynov

David Leynov is a second-year ILR student interested in collective representation and promoting democracy in the workplace.

Shraddha Harshvardhan

Shraddha Harshvardhan, known as Rad, is majoring in Policy Analysis and Management, with minors in Business and Inequality Studies. She is particularly interested in immigration policy. Outside of the Roosevelt Institute, she is in a consulting club, student government, and a social sorority.

Improving Enforceability of Title I of the ADA

By Samantha Lustig, sl2477@cornell.edu

Many employers still have misconceptions about hiring people with disabilities, and thus hesitate to hire them. Litigation is the only recourse provided to disabled individuals who are discriminated against, however they struggle to make their case in the courtroom. [1] Thus, the enforceability of Title I of the ADA must be improved. EEOC regulations should be altered so that the interactive process for determining the reasonability of an accommodation is mandatory and the EEOC should maintain a database of reasonable accommodations. Additionally, the provision of grants to disabled individuals with Title I claims is a potential policy solution to the legal representation issue, but more research must be done on the causal links between representation of disabled people and poverty.

Background

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed in 1992. Title I of the ADA outlawed discrimination on the basis of disability in all aspects of employment. The Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC) was tasked with creating Title I regulations and enforcing the law. However, judicial rulings on Title I over the next few years, like *Sutton v. United Airlines* and *Toyota v. Williams*, trended toward a much more restrictive interpretation of the definition of disability. This meant that many plaintiffs with disabilities lost motions to dismiss or summary judgment, and thus the question of whether they were even discriminated against was never reached. Congress passed the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) in 2008 to remedy this problem and clarify the legal definition of disability. The ADAAA defined the term “major life activity” with a definitive list as well as a non-exclusive list of bodily functions that relate to major life activities. [2] This expanded the size of the protected class under

Title I of the ADA and allowed more Title I cases to reach the question of whether or not a reasonable accommodation could have been made. However, while more plaintiffs are being recognized as disabled, they still struggle to win lawsuits because the ADAAA has failed to clarify the meaning of a “reasonable accommodation.”

Policy Idea

EEOC regulations should be altered so that the interactive processes framework for determining the reasonability of an accommodation is mandatory and the EEOC should maintain an online database of reasonable accommodations with information on implementation and cost. Additionally, disabled individuals who fall below the poverty line and file a charge with the EEOC under Title I should be given the opportunity to apply for a grant for legal counsel if they are given a Notice of Right to Sue from the EEOC.

Policy Analysis

The ADAAA has failed to address the confusion behind the term “reasonable accommodation.”

Scholars such as Carrie Griffin Basas have argued that accommodations are equivalent to access for people with disabilities. [3] The EEOC has provided some guidance for employers and employees in how to go about determining a reasonable accommodation. EEOC regulations state that, when necessary, the employer should use an informal, interactive process with the disabled individual in order to determine an appropriate set of accommodations. However, this “when necessary” language makes it unclear to both employers and courts whether this interactive process is mandatory or not. Existing case law demonstrates a judicial trend towards limited deference to these EEOC’s regulations. [4] Since there has been a lack in interpretive clarity, making the interactive process mandatory would clear up many misconceptions on how to interpret the reasonable accommodation language found in the ADA. The interactive process is also designed to make it easier to determine a reasonable accommodation that satisfies both parties. A study by the Job Accommodation Network found that every dollar spent on a

reasonable accommodation created \$50 in benefits for the employer. [5] Employers would benefit from the process being made mandatory because of this net gain for employers.

A database of reasonable accommodations would also help make the interactive process easier on both parties and provide them with some potential ideas that have worked for others in similar situations in the past. According to a Job Accommodation Network (JAN) survey of employers, 59% reported that accommodations they made had no cost, while those who did experience a cost only reported spending \$500 on average. [6] Despite this, many employers report that their main concern regarding reasonable accommodations is cost. [7]. While JAN has its own workplace accommodations database, it does not provide information on cost or strategies for effective implementation, which are major information gaps that an EEOC database could fill.

The EEOC has failed to address the issue of proper legal representation. Roughly 27% of Americans with disabilities live below the poverty line, which is more than two times the poverty rate for all Americans. Additionally, only 19.5% of people with disabilities participate in the labor force. [8] These statistics describe a group that is very economically vulnerable, and thus struggles to find proper representation when they face discrimination in employment. Although the ADA has clarified the definition of disability, in practice that has not always been the case. A 2018 study conducted on court cases where the defendant lost on the grounds that they did not meet the definition of

disability under the ADA found that roughly a quarter of plaintiffs were pro se, meaning they were representing themselves in court. [10] The data on poverty rates within the disability community seems to indicate that plaintiffs simply lack the money to hire an attorney. However, this causal link in current research is unclear. The lack of representation may also be linked to issues of communication between client and attorney, or an inability to find an attorney willing to take on a case, particularly one where the payout from a lawsuit may be minimal. Therefore, the provision of grants to people who receive a notice of right to sue from the EEOC may not be the most effective solution. More research is required in order to confirm this causal link before proposing a grant-based solution.

Next Steps

Congress should commission the EEOC to conduct a study the causal link between poverty and the choice to forgo representation in disability discrimination cases. It is clear that more research needs to be done on this subjects and given the large impact that the employment of disabled individuals has on the economy and government welfare programs, Congress has a vested interest in funding such research. Congress should also mandate that the EEOC change the wording in its regulations on Title I of the ADA to say that the employer should always utilize the interactive process when determining reasonable accommodations. The EEOC should also be mandated to collect annual reports from employers on their use of the interactive process and the reasonable accommodations that

they have subsequently put in place as a result, including information on cost and how it was implemented. This information, in addition to more comprehensive research on reasonable accommodations, should be used to create an EEOC database of reasonable accommodations. These changes will ultimately make disability discrimination litigation clearer by clarifying the necessity of the interactive process in a positive manner and making it more clear what exactly constitutes a reasonable accommodation.

Key Facts

- 26.03% of losing plaintiffs making Title I claims were pro se. [11]
- As of 2014, 27% of people with disabilities aged 18-64 live in poverty. [12]
- In 2013 only 34% of people ages 18-64 with disabilities were employed, while the nondisabled employment rate was 74.2%. [13]
- 59% of employers report workplace accommodations they have had no cost, while those who did experience a cost only reported spending \$500 on average.

Talking Points

- Current EEOC regulations do not make clear whether the interactive process is mandatory, thus creating confusion for employers and employees alike.
- An EEOC reasonable accommodations database would provide significant guidance to employers on what a reasonable accommodation looks like in practice.

- Many disabled individuals with Title I claims lack adequate legal representation.

Action Plan Snapshot

Changes like the ones proposed here are likely to face opposition from some business interests, who have historically opposed expanding the regulatory power of the EEOC and the ADA in general. Thus, it will be necessary to build a coalition of supporters before bringing these changes to Congress. Since these recommendations concern the legal profession, it could be helpful to lobby for the support of the American Bar Association. Additionally, since these policy recommendations concern federal law and agency regulations, all lobbying will primarily occur on the Congressional level. The commission of a study on the link between lack of legal representation and poverty as well as the creation of a reasonable accommodations database will require funding, so lobbying must be partially targeted at the Senate and House Committees on Appropriations. People to focus attention on include Senator Jerry Moran-R and Senator Jeanne Shaheen-D, chairman and ranking member respectively of the

Subcommittee for Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Issues. Their counterparts in the House are Representative John Culberson-R and Representative José Serrano-D. On the issue of altering EEOC regulations, the two main Congressional committees to focus on are the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions and the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. Additionally, Congressmen who have supported recently passed progressive disability legislation, like the ABLE Act of 2014, would be good people to target for potential sponsorship of a bill that includes these regulatory changes. Senator Bob Casey-D of Pennsylvania, sponsor of the Senate's version of the ABLE Act, would be an example of a good person to reach out to.

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Solving the Insulin Crisis

By Lindsey Dahms-Nolan, ldd52@cornell.edu

The price of synthetic insulin has steadily risen over the last two decades, increasing by 197% since 2003 [1]. As costs continue to rise for American consumers, diabetics are rationing their insulin use to dangerously low levels. To decrease the price of insulin and thereby ensure increased access, the federal government should require compulsory patent licensing for the production of insulin within the United States. This would terminate patent protections for insulin brands, allowing for the production of generic alternatives that would substantially decrease costs for consumers.

Background

Diabetes is a chronic illness that interferes with the body's ability to process blood sugar, and is primarily regulated through daily insulin use [2]. For bodies that cannot naturally produce insulin, access to the drug is necessary for survival. Without the injection of synthetic insulin, unregulated blood sugar levels induce diabetic ketoacidosis, a condition that dehydrates the body's cells and can kill within a matter of days [3]. Diabetics who cannot afford price increases are then relegated to painful health complications and even death as a result of attempting to cut costs through rationing. Currently, one in four diabetics admits to rationing insulin dosages to offset increases in price [4].

In 1996, one vial of insulin cost just over twenty dollars. Today, the same vial sells for roughly \$300 [5]. Diabetics use between three and six vials per month depending on individual responses to the drug, which magnifies price increases for low and middle-income consumers [5]. More troubling still, three pharmaceutical companies are responsible for 92% of global insulin production: Novo Nordisk, Sanofi, and American-based Eli Lilly [6]. A lack of competition has

given these corporations enormous leverage in setting prices, while the consumer base that depends on their product for basic survival has minimal bargaining power. The effects of price increases have affected diabetics at all income levels. While uninsured diabetics have borne the majority of recent price increases, diabetics with insurance, particularly those covered through the Affordable Care Act or employers, have not been insulated entirely from increases in price [5].

Policy Idea

The federal government should enforce compulsory patent licensing of Eli Lilly's insulin brand to allow for the production of generic alternatives in the American market. This would end the current rationing crisis by reducing costs for consumers, and substantially improve health outcomes for Americans with diabetes. Additionally, the injection of competition in the American market could impact global insulin prices as companies like Novo Nordisk and Sanofi would have to compete with Eli Lilly's adjusted pricing, in addition to competing with new generic producers. Price competition would incentivize

consumers to buy generics, forcing corporations like Eli Lilly to match generic pricing to keep their consumer base.

Policy Analysis

The cause of the insulin crisis is twofold: it is the result of policy failure in pharmaceutical patent regulations, and the inevitable outcome of a system captured by special interests. Insulin has been under patent protection since its discovery and subsequent commercialization in 1923 [11]. While patent protections are only legally enforceable for twenty years, drug manufacturers have made incremental changes in the production process of insulin to extend patent terms for nearly a century [11]. Not only does this undermine the purpose of patent protections as temporary measures to spur innovation, it identifies a crucial flaw in the design of the American patent system: protections for modifications in the production process that do not fundamentally change the effectiveness of products allow drugs that have not significantly changed over time to be insulated from competition that would otherwise naturally occur.

These early patent protections allowed a select group of manufacturers to capitalize on the profitability of insulin and prevent potential competitors from entering the market. This gives these companies enormous leverage in setting prices; without the availability of generic drugs, the consumer has no bargaining power and is therefore subject to arbitrary price fluctuations. Because insulin is necessary to maintaining quality of life for diabetics, this group is uniquely vulnerable to predatory price controls. Thus, the implementation of compulsory patent licensing would give consumers greater bargaining power by disrupting current patent regimes and allowing for the production of affordable, generic alternatives to mainstream brands.

This has proven vastly effective in India, a country responsible for a staggering share of global production of pharmaceuticals [12]. In 2012, the government issued a compulsory patent license for the production of cancer drug Nexavar [12]. This reduced costs by 90% for consumers, and has had no significant effects on the German company that initially patented the drug. India and a growing number of countries across the globe are using patent licensing as a tool to combat the financial exploitation of vulnerable populations, proving their ability to both reduce prices and induce market competition. Compulsory patent licensing has never been applied to insulin, but analysis of other instances of compulsory licensing of pharmaceuticals in countries such as India and Canada are a prime starting point, as these licensing agreements regulate corporations of

similar size and value to Eli Lilly. Past compulsory patent licensing agreements also indicate a positive correlation between licensing and increased access to drugs, and in no way prove that these licensing agreements cause significant financial harm to corporations.

While multiple provisions exist to justify statutory authority for compulsory patent licenses, they are heavily underutilized in the United States [7]. A compulsory patent license (CPL) pursuant to insulin production would operate on a scale larger than any previous federal exercise of authority over mandatory licensing [7]. Still, there is legal precedent for licensing of this scale; enforcement of the CPL in the United States would follow guidelines outlined in the TRIPS agreement as a number of developed nations have done [8].

The Canadian approach to CPLs is a prime example: Canada has issued more CPLs than any other nation in the world [9]. The vast majority of mandatory licensing agreements issued by the Canadian government are related to pharmaceutical products. As a nation with similar consumer bases and economic interests, Canada serves as an excellent indicator for predicting economic effects of CPLs on the North American pharmaceutical industry. In recent years, Canada has focused CPLs on HIV medication, and drug development for infectious diseases [13].

This has primarily affected Canadian pharmaceutical corporation Apotex, which is responsible for the production of the majority of HIV medication produced in Canada [13]. Not only did this unambiguously lower prices for Canadian consumers, but it did

little to affect the sales of Apotex, which exceed one billion dollars per year [14]. This example is not parallel, but it illustrates three crucial points: (1) that North American nations possess the legal justification for issuing CPLs under the TRIPS agreement, (2) that CPLs lower drug prices, and (3) that major pharmaceutical companies diversify products to the extent that CPLs affecting specific drugs do not hurt their overall bottom line.

Next Steps

The first step in implementing this policy is a written legal justification for infringing on the patent rights of Eli Lilly. This is easily accomplished by compiling data on the necessity of access to insulin. The legal justification should be rooted in statistical claims of increased access contributing to the public good; analysis of how the rising costs of insulin has decreased access to this life-altering drug would be sufficient grounds for the government to intervene on the behalf of Americans directly impacted by these price increases. After this, the federal government could enforce a compulsory patent license under provisions of the TRIPS agreement, allowing for regulation of the license through WTO standards, and/or through US code section 28 that allows for patent infringement in cases where licensing contributes to the public good. This could either be accomplished through an executive agency regulation of Eli Lilly enforced through the TRIPS agreement, or explicit Congressional legislation rooted in American legal codes that follow guidelines put forth in the TRIPS agreement.

Key Facts

- The cost of insulin has more than tripled between 2002 and 2013, while the cost of other medications for managing diabetes fell 16% in the same period [10]
- One in four diabetics have admitted to rationing insulin use in an effort to cut costs [4]
- Three pharmaceutical companies control 92% of global insulin production [6]
- When a generic version of a drug becomes available, prices can decrease by 80% or more [10]

Talking Points

- 29 million Americans live with diabetes, and the vast majority rely on daily insulin use to manage their illness [10]
- Insurance has been ineffective in mitigating price increases as diabetics with insurance are still forced to pay higher out of pocket costs
- Current price increases are the product of a global oligopoly on insulin production that allows the world's three largest players to set global prices
- Ending their patent regime would inject competition into the market and incentivize more efficient approaches to production

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Reducing Carbon Emissions Through a Revenue-Neutral Carbon Tax in New York City

By Jack Ross-Pilkington, jsr328@cornell.edu

Global climate change is a serious threat to human society at large. However, it can be solved through a reduction in carbon emissions. My proposal is for New York City to implement a citywide carbon tax. The revenue from this tax would be used to reduce the cost of mass transit. This plan will be an effective tool to reduce the cities' carbon emissions.

Background

According to the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the rise in the average temperature caused by greenhouse gases can disrupt ecosystems, intensify droughts and floods, and increase the possibility of violent conflict [1]. One common policy proposal to combat this problem is a carbon tax. Broadly speaking, a carbon tax is a tax on the sale of resources that release carbon dioxide [2]. This can include oil, natural gas, or other fossil fuels [3]. However, carbon taxes increase the cost of goods, which means that low-income families are disproportionately targeted [4]. Some proposals include cutting different types of regressive taxes to make up for the carbon tax. For example, in Washington State, a ballot initiative was put forth that cut the state sales tax in concert with a tax on fossil fuels [5]. However, public transit fees also act as regressive pseudo-taxes. Lower-income families pay a greater percentage of their incomes to fares compared to higher-income families [6]. In addition, those who cannot afford tickets sometimes resort to illegal fare evasion. In 2013, 24,747 people were arrested

for fare evasion in New York City alone [7].

Policy Idea

New York State should raise the statewide gas tax from 4.375% (16.9¢ per gallon) to 8.75% (33.8¢). The revenue raised from such an increase would be used to reduce fares on all MTA public transportation in New York City. Over time, the tax on gasoline will be gradually replaced with a tax on electricity usage.

Policy Analysis

The main beneficiaries of this proposal would be those who already take public transportation instead of using cars. They would not have the burden of the additional tax on fuel, and would save money on fares. Car users, on the other hand, would need to either reduce their car usage or eliminate it altogether. Businesses that use gasoline would also suffer. Low-income families would neither gain nor lose from this proposal because the increased fuel tax would be counterbalanced by the eliminated transit fare.

When examining the source of carbon emissions in New York City, it's clear that gas-powered transportation makes up a large

portion of total carbon emissions. In total, the city emits 49 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions every year [8]. Nearly 20% of those emissions (9 million tons) comes from road transportation [9]. Increasing the gas tax will raise the price of fuel. In addition, eliminating transit fares will encourage taking transit, which will discourage urban sprawl. In other words, both measures work in tandem to reduce car usage (and, by extension, carbon emissions).

This policy should be revenue neutral. The amount of money raised from the additional gas tax revenue should be equal to the money currently received in fares. Every year, the MTA raises \$5.9 billion in fares every year [10]. Meanwhile, the statewide gas tax raises about \$616 million per year [11]. Since \$616 is roughly 10% of 5.9 billion, doubling the tax would mean that fares could be reduced by up to 10%. However, gas prices fluctuate rapidly. For example, last year gas prices rose by 75¢ per gallon [12]. Therefore, it's crucial that the increased gas tax rate must be able to rapidly adjust in accordance with the price of gas.

Although this policy is originally intended for New York City, it can be adjusted to suit any

city with a public transportation system. In fact, it may be easier to implement in a small city, such as Rochester, NY, that only has a bus system [13]. New York City, on the other hand, has a subway, bus, ferry, and commuter rail system [14].

This policy is not meant to be instituted forever. After it is implemented, gasoline sales are likely to decline. As a result, the government will receive less in revenue. Therefore, in order to sustain the source of revenue, the city government should tax electricity usage. Although taxing electricity does not discourage car use, it nonetheless also reduces carbon emissions. In fact, 28% of American CO₂ emissions come from electricity usage [15].

Next Steps

This policy should be implemented. It can be done so through the New York State government. The MTA is jointly funded through both the City and State governments [16]. In 2015, for example, \$170 million in tax revenue and other aid came from the City. Meanwhile, revenue from the state adds up to \$218 million in total [17]. If the revenue can either come from the City or the State, which government should raise the tax? It should be the State government, because the current gas tax is levied by the State [18].

In order for this to happen, the tax would have to be instituted through the state budget process. Initially, the budget is proposed by the governor, but both houses of the State Legislature are required to review the proposal. Once the tax is put in the budget proposal and the proposal is approved by the legislature, then the revenue can be granted to the MTA. At this point,

the MTA would have to approve the reduction in fares. The MTA board of directors, a 17-member board with representatives from City, State and County governments, would be responsible for final approval.

Key Facts

- 28% of total greenhouse gas emissions come from transportation [19]
- Each year, New Yorkers ride the subway more than one billion times [20]
- 45.5% of households in New York City own a car [21]

Talking Points

- This plan pays for itself and is fiscally sustainable
- Both the transportation subsidy and the gas tax work together to reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- This plan does not reduce greenhouse gases through regulation, but instead encourages firms and individuals to change their own behavior.

Action Plan Snapshot

Since this plan is directed at the State government, then advocacy efforts should be focused on the state level. The first step would be to ally with existing statewide environmental organizations, such as Environmental Advocates of New York [22]. In conjunction with these groups, supporters of the policy would lobby members of the New York State Legislature committees that are in key positions to influence the budget. For example, supporters could lobby Assemblymember Helene Weinstein (the chair of the Assembly Ways and Means

Committee) [23] or Senator Catharine Young (the chair of the Senate Finance Committee) [24]. Moreover, the original budget proposal does not come from the legislature, but from the Governor. Therefore, lobbying Governor Cuomo is essential. While direct petitioning may be unrealistic, advocates could try to convince people such as Basil Seggos, the chair of the state Department of Environmental Protection [25]. Within the MTA, advocates could directly lobby Joseph J. Lhota, the chair of the MTA board [26].

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Reducing Recidivism In California: Allowing Inmates to Become Certified Firefighters Through Vocational Training Programs

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To combat negative implications of the prison industrial labor complex in inmate labor, the state of California should 1) convert the inmate wildfire program into guaranteed pathways for firefighting jobs and 2) revise California EMT licensing requirement to allow ex-convicts that have completed the inmate wildfire program into the workforce after release. This would be effective in decreasing recidivism rates, inmates' societal reintegration, and would financially benefit California by an estimated \$100 million per year on wildfire recovery.

Background

California has used inmates to combat state wildfires alongside non-incarcerated firefighters since World War II.¹ Currently, CAL FIRE operates 39 conservation camps that house and train 4,300 inmates/wards to become emergency respondents.² Yet, while CA firefighters earn an average of \$50,099/year, inmate firefighters earn \$2/day or \$1/hour when fighting an active fire.

To participate in the inmate wildfire program, inmates must complete the following things: 1) Have a high school diploma and hold a valid driver's license, 2) take written and physical tests, 3) become an EMT, 4) attend a fire academy.³ However, the licensing requirements in California bar released inmates from working as firefighters, even if they worked as volunteer firefighters when incarcerated.⁴ Additionally, California is ranked as the "worst licensing environment for workers in lower-income occupations"⁵, as strict licensing requirements prevent ex-offenders from securing jobs.

This, in turn, has significantly affected ex-offenders, turning them into second class citizens.

The wage disparity and legal barricades that prisoners must deal with in order to become an active California firefighter illustrate the underlying exploitative ways that prisons have utilized human labor for state benefits. Therefore, the state of California should take action to contest the injustices set forth among prisoners who volunteer their time to fight fires—though the question of true volunteering vs. manipulation of prison labor is still heavily debated.⁶ In addition, since 2011, California has defunded rehabilitative programming in prisons due to its public safety realignment initiative, yet has failed to dramatically impact recidivism rates as 71.9 percent of individuals on post-release community supervision were rearrested nonetheless.⁷ Therefore, to combat this rate, California would benefit by revising their approach towards prison rehabilitative programming.

Policy Idea

The state of California should convert inmate wildfire programs into guaranteed pathways and revise existing EMT licensing laws, allowing inmates to enter the firefighter workforce upon completion of the program and release of sentence. These pathways would assist inmates in meeting the requirements of being a firefighter, such as providing GED classes for those in pursuit of a high school diploma, educational courses for EMT certification, and fire academy training courses. During their time, these volunteer inmates in the pathways can train and serve as firefighters at existing concentration fire camps.

Policy Analysis

Vocational training programs that allow inmates into the workforce would offer inmates an opportunity to surpass prison labor's tendency towards exploitation. Firstly, the state of California should recognize the ways that the revised inmate

wildfire program would resist the dehumanizing effects of the prison industrial complex,¹¹ such as empowering inmates, allowing for emotionally and physically vulnerable experiences, and encouraging inmates to work for good cause.

Secondly, inmates in the wildfire program should be rightly compensated for their labor. For instance, California's wildfire budget has have more than tripled from \$242 million in the 2013 fiscal year, to almost \$800 million in 2018—exhausting CalFire's annual budget for 2018 of \$442.8 million.⁸ Considering this, it is imperative to note that prisoners within the current inmate wildfire program are being paid lower wages while doing strenuous and crucial work for the state of California, yet are not assured any job access. In other words, inmates are currently participating in a program that acts as a vocational training program, without the guarantee of joining the workforce after release. Therefore, compensation for inmates within the program is unbalanced, compared to their contribution towards fighting California's frequent fires. These facts demonstrate how labor exploitation is prevalent in California's prison system.

In contrast, the revised inmate wildfire program would not only secure future jobs, but would also thus help inmates reintegrate into society once released. This program would specifically assist willing inmates into gaining certifications and skills that equal or exceed those of non-incarcerated firefighters. Indeed, the promise of long-term employment after release is the most effective way to reintegrate prisoners into society and reduce recidivism.⁹ In fact, there

is a 20 percent reduction in return to crime by non-violent offenders—who make up the majority of incarcerated individuals—if given immediate access to employment. This can be attributed to the incentive-based economic model of crime, where individuals partake in criminal activity because of the profit, tastes, and preferences of the activity.¹⁰ However, if individuals are immediately attached to employment after release, it is predicted that individuals will spend more time in legal activity while their time in illegal activity decreases/diminishes altogether.

Furthermore, creating guaranteed pathways into jobs after release generates a positive externality for Californian communities due to potential reduced rates of recidivism. While inmates benefit both during their sentences and through the guarantee of a job with fair wages after release, the state benefits with the increased number of firefighters willing to work towards eliminating contagious wildfires. California also advantages from the added number of firefighters amongst the incarcerated people, saving about \$100 million per year in wages, as inmate firefighters earn lower pay than non-incarcerated firefighters, in exchange for earlier release.¹²

Next Steps

California legislators should gather data on EMT hiring practices, based on California bill AB-2293: “An act to add and repeal Section 1797.229 of the Health and Safety Code, relating to emergency medical services” by Assemblymember Eloise Reyes (D-San Bernardino) that was recently signed into law by

Governor Brown. This bill enables legislators to research on discriminatory practices found in EMT hiring operations.¹³ From there, California legislators can evaluate counterproductive EMT licensing policies and how to amend them to create a more inclusive and efficient workforce. In addition, the state of California will use federal funding for wildfire relief and additional interstate donations into training professional firefighters through inmate wildfire programs.

Key Facts

- Inmates that participated in the inmate wildfire program and served as resident firefighters at concentration fire camps are prohibited from joining the firefighting workforce after release.⁴
- Despite California's efforts to combat recidivism by implementing new public safety operations, recidivism rates remained at a steady 71.9% of the individuals released under post-release community supervision.⁷

Talking Points

- The most effective way to reduce recidivism is to provide support through job-training/vocational programs in order to reintegrate prisoners into society by long-term employment.¹⁰
- The RAND Corporation asserts that general education and vocational programs such as the inmate wildfire program, reduces recidivism and improves job outlook.¹⁴
- The firefighting program for inmates is perceived to

“save California an estimated \$100 million per year” on wildfires, as inmates work for little pay during incarceration in exchange for earlier release.¹¹

- California could soon join 16 states that have already eased or eliminated licensing barriers for Americans with criminal records since 2015.¹⁵

Action Plan Snapshot

The following California-based policy/advocacy organizations are focused on anti-recidivism and prison/prison labor reform: Clean Slate Practice Program Coordinator at the East Bay Community Law Center, Young Women’s Freedom Center, Anti-Recidivism Coalition, Insight Prison Project, California Prison Focus. These organizations can provide crucial expertise on reform and can be sources of advocacy, as well as lobby for rehabilitative reforms to state legislators and the Emergency Medical Services Authority (EMSA) of California, who oversee statewide wildfire recovery as well as dictate over EMT licensing regulations.

Alongside the anti-recidivism groups, legislator Assemblymember Reyes should carefully bring back to the table California bill AB-2293 Sec(1) as introduced, as opposed to its chaptered version, as it originally implied that legislators would have prohibited agencies from denying certification based on criminal history. Legislators must be cautious of language,

considering opponents’ concerns of the bill. For example, Commissioner Burch of the California Commission on Emergency Medical Services is particularly wary of EMT certifications that could technically be granted to pedophiles who are Penal Code 290 registrants.¹⁶ However, inmates already must have no history of “arson, sexual crimes, kidnapping, gang-affiliation, escape attempts or...a life sentence”¹⁴ in order to qualify for the current inmate wildfire program in California.

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The Merits of Card Check

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Because the current National Labor Relations Board guidelines for holding union elections are not conducive to ensuring the success of unionization efforts in the private sector, the Board should implement a “card-check” procedure, by which employees can sign cards over a three month period and thereby unionize via a simple majority. A card-check system is significantly more likely to spur successful unionization efforts and reduce instances of unfair labor practices.

Background

The marked decline the overall rate of union membership in the United States since the 1950s has ushered in a “New Gilded Age,” characterized by profound wealth and conspicuous consumption among the rich and utter destitution among lower-income workers. The decline of unions as a redistributive mechanism at least partially explains the rise of this inequality. The United States experienced a 10.4% decrease in union membership between 1970 and 1989, and the International Monetary Fund found that union declension in advanced economies has skewed the balance of wealth in favor of the top 10% [1, 2]. Though wage inequality in the private sector skyrocketed as a result of de-unionization, relatively strong unions can account for up to 80% of the slowed growth in wage inequality in the public sector [3]. Yet the role organized labor plays in the economy is hardly limited to combatting inequality. Such unions as the United Steelworkers and the United Auto Workers provide, on top of myriad benefits and protections, a sense of stability and work-life balance to their members [4]. The decline of unions thus entails the decline of work-life balance, as well as the end of a

mechanism that combatted economic inequality.

Policy Idea

The National Labor Relations Board should revise its union election guidelines by ending the secret ballot union election and replacing it with a “card check” system, by which bargaining units can unionize if a sufficient number of employees sign forms that declare their desire to join a union. Initially, the Board should merely recognize the outcomes of card-check efforts by allowing any workplace in which at least 50% of employees signed cards over a period of three months to unionize. After a grace period of four years, the Board should switch entirely to a card check system and no longer recognize the outcomes of secret ballot elections.

Policy Analysis

Card-check unionization proceedings have the potential to significantly increase unionization rates in the United States. Because the NLRB had only briefly recognized the outcomes of “other suitable method[s]” of union election procedures, such as card-check proceedings, in the 1930s, the best data for a direct comparison between card-check and

secret ballot proceedings comes from British Columbia [5]. When the Canadian province enacted secret-ballot elections, a procedure which largely mirrors the current NLRB guidelines for union elections in the United States, the success rate of unionization efforts in the private sector fell from about 93% in 1982 to about 70% in 1987 [6]. Among the key attributes of the relative failure of secret-ballot elections vis-à-vis card-check procedures include the proclivity of management for utilizing opposition tactics, as well as the heightened effectiveness of such tactics in the milieu of a secret ballot election [7]. Indeed, general opposition to unionization on the part of management was twice as effective under secret ballot conditions as under card-check conditions [8]. Caveats, however, remain, as the British Columbia case does not perfectly reflect NLRB proceedings. The British Columbia Labor Board, for example, mandated a 10-day time constraint on secret-ballot elections, a constraint which does not exist in the United States [9]. Still, a drop of 23% in the success rate of unionization efforts in the private sector is telling, and management opposition no doubt played a major role. In 27.5% of

card-check organizing cases, management made an “all-out effort to oppose [the] union,” whereas this rate of complete management opposition jumps to 66% for all elections, card-check and otherwise [10]. Card-check elections were also significantly less likely to result in management discrimination against union supporters, with a 35% rate of discrimination as compared to a 44.8% rate in secret-ballot settings [11]. Furthermore, across nearly all categories of workplace discrimination, unfair labor practices occurred less frequently in card-check settings than in secret ballot elections [12]. Though the reasons remain varied, one can speculate that the lower-stakes environment of a card-check proceeding, which occurs over several weeks or even months, does not provide management with the impetus to engage in unfair labor practices as compared to a high-stakes, all-or-nothing election. Ultimately, however, any assertion of the superiority of card-check proceedings is useless if it does not involve a thorough discussion of the tangible benefits labor unions provide to workers. Analyses of income distributions, for instance, show that union density is positively correlated with increases in the wage share of national income in advanced economies [13]. Furthermore, the labor share of national income in the United States reached its lowest point (65.1%) in 2007, when unions were particularly weak, and its highest point (72.0%) in 1970, when unions were exceptionally strong [14]. Moreover, an American Sociological Association study confirmed the negative relationship between income inequality and

trade union membership by studying Gini coefficients and union membership in Sweden, Finland, and the United States [15]. Even though there appears to be no causal relationship between job satisfaction and unionization, union involvement in quality of work life measures has the potential to lead to significant quality of work life improvements for workers [16,17]. The implementation of a card-check union election procedure by the NLRB will not only increase unionization rates, but it will also, by proxy, increase the wage share of national income, which translates to higher real wages for working Americans. This principle is perhaps best demonstrated in the remarkable ability of public sector unions to increase relative pay [18]. Thus card-check proceedings, by raising wages, decreasing income inequality, and increasing the quality of work-life balance, can tangibly improve the lives of working Americans in both material and non-material ways.

Next Steps

Because a card-check system presents significant advantages over secret ballot elections with regard to unionization success rates and reductions in unfair labor practices, the National Labor Relations Board should adopt card-check as its preferred method of union recognition. This entails revising Sec. 3. (b) of the National Labor Relations Act, which delegates the Board the power to oversee secret ballot elections [19]. Merely revising this section by adding the recognition of card-check results would ameliorate the problem, though because the Policy Idea calls

for a phasing-out of secret ballot elections, an Act of Congress would be necessary to direct the Board to eventually switch to only recognizing the results of card-check proceedings. Congress should conduct hearings to ensure that the Board is taking the necessary steps to make the transition, and to ensure that it has the necessary resources to fully transition to card-check within a timeframe of four years. The NLRB will retain the power to set internal deadlines for individual steps to achieve this at its own discretion.

Key Facts

- Unionization success rates fell from 93% to 70% when a US-style election system was implemented in British Columbia [6]
- Management opposition to unionization efforts was twice as effective under secret-ballot conditions than under card-check conditions [8]
- High income inequality in the United States is aggravated by a lack of robust union membership [15]

Talking Points

- Card-check proceedings reduce discriminatory practices on the part of management by 24.6% [11]
- Card-check proceedings are correlated with an increase in the success rate of unionization efforts of 28.2% [6].
- Union density is positively correlated with increases in the wage share of national

income in advanced economies [13]

- Public sector unions have been successful almost across the board at raising pay [18]

Action Plan Snapshot

The Employee Free Choice Act is currently the most comprehensive bill available with regard to the implementation of card-check proceedings, but it failed in the Senate in 2007 and stalled in 2009 [20]. Past efforts to pass the Employee Free Choice Act have failed in part because of concerted lobbying efforts by such organizations as the Society for Human Resource Management [21]. Any new consideration of the Act, therefore, must be accompanied by an extensive labor lobbying campaign. In New York State, 1199SEIU has been remarkably successful with regard to mounting campaigns such as the relatively successful Fight for \$15 and for efforts at Immigration Reform [22]. Still, 1199SEIU's counter-lobbying power is not enough to guarantee a successful statewide campaign for card-check proceedings. When the bill was last considered by the Senate in 2007, senators Schumer and Clinton both voted "yea" [23]. Because Senator Gillibrand is undoubtedly in favor of it as well, as are most Democrats, the question turns to New York's House delegation. When the Employee Free Choice Act was introduced on the House floor in 2007, one of its sponsors was Republican Peter King of New York's 2nd District. In concurrence with an 1199SEIU campaign, Peter King should serve to rally other Republicans around the EFCA. Though some Upstate Republicans, such as Tom Reed,

who co-sponsored a bill to curtail the NLRB's power to inform workers of their right to unionize and co-sponsored the National Right-to-Work Act, will likely remain unconvinced, Peter King's leadership could generate bipartisan support [24]. Regardless, the Employee Free Choice Act passed the House in 2007 and failed only due to a Republican filibuster [25]. Now, with the "Nuclear Option" in effect, it must be introduced once more, along with a campaign, led by Peter King, to capture a few Republican votes in the Senate.

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Modern Day Debtors' Prisons Must Come to an End

By Shraddha Harshvardhan, sh849@cornell.edu

Although debtors' prisons are technically illegal in the United States, cities today rely on fines and fees imposed on residents as a major source of revenue, and residents are sent to prison if they fail to pay. Given the financial hardship faced by lower income Americans, this practice essentially imprisons people for simply being poor. It is therefore proposed that cities offer community service as an alternative to payment of fines and fees.

Background

Debtor's prisons were banned in 1833 and the Supreme Court affirmed they are unconstitutional under the Fourteenth Amendment's Equal Protection clause. Modern day debtors prisons exist because of ambiguity in the law; fines and fees are illegal, but only if the debtor is considered "indigent" and "willful" to pay. In practice, judges often use extremely vague criteria for determining whether someone fits these characteristics [2]. Another reason is that local police have been rigorously encouraged to increase the number of citations for minor municipal violations to fill budget gaps [10].

An urgent need for change exists because this practice exacerbates socioeconomic and racial inequalities, impacting already impoverished Americans and racial minorities. Imprisonment often causes already poor debtors to lose their jobs and drivers' licenses [3], later preventing them from transporting to their jobs; The Brennan Center for Justice found that fines and fees created significant barriers for individuals trying to rebuild their lives in each of the 15 states they examined [4]. Furthermore, The Ferguson Report

details how this practice worsens racial inequalities [6]. In fact, tax revenues are too meager to cover municipal expenses in mostly black cities, so blacks are targeted disproportionately. Also important to note, children are not exempt from such fines and fees.

Policy options, apart from the proposed policy, include changing fines and tying fines to income [9], but these options lack efficacy given that they still require individual lawyer input. Bench cards, which give judges clearer guidelines, have been adopted in states like Ohio and Washington but they have not been in place long enough to empirically assess outcomes.

Policy Idea

The proposed policy is offering community service as an option for all Americans who cannot pay their fines and fees. They would have this option regardless of whether a judge chooses to offer it to them as one. However, given that those with high employment demands may not be able to take time off, community service should only be imposed at the defendant's request or when the defendant could not pay off their fines and fees. Regarding the

number of hours of service that must be accomplished, this would match the proposed fine or free. For example, if the fine is \$100, approximately 10 hours, assuming a worker earns approximately \$10 per hour, would need to be accomplished. Additionally, the amount of time allotted to complete service hours would correspond to how many need to be completed.

Policy Analysis

This policy has two main benefits. First, since 1991, courts have been endorsing the idea of community service as an option, even though this would be after the subjective verification of indigence. Yet because of these endorsements, in 12 of 15 states the Brennan Center studied, interviewees reported there were community service options available [1]. The existing programs could be followed and expanded. What is unique about such programs is that they benefit both the community and the individual, as they can involve themselves in positions that match their skills and interests, so service feels less like a chore; programs include helping mental health services, job training, or maintaining public spaces.

Apart from this benefit, the main benefit is the relief of a financial burden. Fines and fees have a large range, from under \$100 to over \$1,000, and debtors are charged 6% interest on what they have not paid off [3]. Allowing debtors to participate in community service programs would help to ensure they do not need to incur significant fractions of their salary or ever face interest. Though the option of offering community service hours in lieu of a monetary punishment exists, according to court clerks, only 16 out of 67 Florida counties converted any mandatory criminal debt to community service [1]. The proposed policy would allow for more frequent usage of community service programs, at the will of individuals of course.

On the other hand, there are costs to this proposal that must be addressed. It is estimated that states would need to find another way of paying off \$25 million worth of municipal expenses, and this could go up to \$80 million [1]. Yet this alternative way would not take from the lowest income Americans. It is important to note, however, that this money may not necessarily be found elsewhere in which case states would have to cut costs, for example on schools or Medicaid programs.

Another drawback is that managers in the retail industry or fast food industry, for example, are extremely unforgiving, given the high turnover rate, at 150% [8], primarily caused by the belief that the industries' workers are easily replaceable. It is thus difficult for many individuals in these types of positions to take off time to acquire community service hours without risking their job security.

Furthermore, the increased time needed to complete service hours, in addition to work, and possibly taking care of a family, can be strenuous. This is especially true in cases in which fines and fees are thousands of dollars, equating to a huge commitment in time. Nevertheless, attending to community service hours would help individuals keep their jobs and take care of their families, when compared to having to spend days in jail for not being able to pay their fines or fees.

Next Steps

Through the policy analysis, it has been determined that while community service programs provide a beneficial solution, the policy as is should not be implemented; instead a couple of modifications should be made. For one, it must be mandated that late night or weekend community service hours be available for those who cannot miss work. Second, there ought to be a cap on the number of hours that can possibly be given so that workers do not end up with hundreds of hours to complete. Moreover, just last year, Governor Abbott signed into effect SB 1913 and HB 351 [5], resulting in Texans being able to receive alternative options to paying fines and fees such as payment plans, fee waivers, and community service [7]. The first two parts of this should be considered and researched before concluding upon a solution.

Key Facts

- The Brennan Center for Justice found that fines and fees created significant barriers for individuals trying to rebuild their lives

in each of the 15 states they examined [4]

- The Ferguson Report details how fines and fees as punishments worsen racial inequalities already present in America's prison system [6]
- Children are not exempt from fines and fees

Talking Points

- Community service programs benefit both the community and the individual completing it, giving them important life skills
- When given the option, only 16 out of 67 Florida counties converted any mandatory criminal debt imposed in felony cases to community service [1*]
- Altering the proposed policy to ensure community service hours are accessible, and there is a cap on them, can prevent burdening poor hard-working Americans excessively

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Economic Policy

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Revitalizing New York's Southern Tier with the Promotion of a Diverse Renewable Energy Economy

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Rural communities in Upstate New York have not received their share of economic growth over the past several years. Shifting consumer preferences domestically, international tariffs, and an ever more volatile climate have all contributed to the hardship felt by New York's farmers. An investment in renewable energies in the Southern Tier counties could provide financial and energy security to these farmers, bolster New York's renewable energy sector, and further the State's efforts to meet its energy goals.

Background

Agriculture and food production constitute a \$37 billion industry in New York State; an industry dominated by dairy farming [1, 2, 3]. Indeed, New York is the nation's third largest producer of milk, and its largest producer of cottage cheese and yogurt [4]. Yet despite the fact that dairy farming lies at the core of New York's agricultural economy, our state's dairy farmers have certainly seen better years.

The American dairy industry as a whole has witnessed increased volatility. Reductions in federal subsidies, shifting consumer preferences in favor of milk-alternatives, and an oversupply of milk in both domestic and international markets have all driven the market price of milk down to below \$20 per hundredweight (50 kg) [5]. This crisis in the dairy industry has gone so far as to strain our relations with our second-largest trading partner; a push for Canada to end its ostensible dumping of excess dairy output into international markets, in addition to its up 300% tariff on dairy and other agricultural imports,

had been central to the renegotiation of NAFTA [6]. It remains to be seen whether the USMCA will enable U.S. milk producers to have access to 3.5% of Canada's crucial \$16 billion dairy market, or whether the U.S. can increase dairy exports to Asia, a burgeoning dairy-consuming market, or Mexico, its largest foreign dairy market [7,8,9].

These market uncertainties are exacerbated by the disastrous effects of climate change, which have led to hotter and drier conditions conducive to a shortage of corn, driving up the cost of feed, an input in dairy farming [10]. The present uncertainty afflicting New York's dairy industry has led to mass sell offs, consolidation, exodus from the state, and worst of all, an increase in suicide rates among dairy farmers [11]. This hardship has manifested itself throughout Upstate's rural regions, which have seen a marked decline in population as their residents leave in search of opportunity elsewhere.

Policy Idea

The New York Green Bank division of the New York State Energy Research and Development

Authority's (NYSERDA) should work in conjunction with and New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets to subsidize a conversion to more cost-effective and environmentally-friendly energy consumption by dairy farmers in New York's Southern Tier (see figure 1). These agencies should work in conjunction with solar panel and wind turbine manufacturers in the State to facilitate the installation of solar and wind energy infrastructure on small- to medium-sized farms (farms with less than 200 cows), while investing in the promulgation of Anaerobic Digester (AD) technology on larger farms.

Policy Analysis

This proposal has the potential to improve the economic stance of New York's dairy farmers on both the expenditure and revenue fronts. Firstly, by improving farmers' energy self-reliance, it would reduce energy costs incurred, costs that while relatively small constitute a significant proportion of all input costs. To become self-reliant would mean a reduction

of input costs by up to 3% [14]. It is perfectly feasible to install enough wind turbines and/or solar panels on a small- to medium- sized dairy farm to achieve energy-sustainability, and while savings would be minor relative to overall input costs, such savings could very well mean the difference between annual net gains and net losses. Secondly, the ability to sell excess energy, whether it be net-metered electricity generated by solar and wind technology or methane gas harnessed from manure from AD technology, would provide an additional source of income to cow farmers. Such a combination of energy savings and sales would improve long term financial security of dairy operations.

This is important because, as it stands, the average dairy farm in the Northeast can be expected to just about break even just on the production of milk. Cash flow for the average northeastern farm was -\$0.01 per hundredweight in 2017 [14]. This is because cost of inputs, which has increased in recent years due to feed shortages and other factors, and the market value of milk per hundredweight, which has diminished due to aforementioned factors, are roughly equal, fluctuating at just under \$20 (see figures 3 and 4 above). In northeastern dairy farms, the cost of utilities, electricity included, averages to about 3% of total input costs of milk production [14]. Furthermore, energy costs are likely to rise significantly in the future as the incidence of heat waves increases; it will be necessary to devote more energy to keeping dairy cows from overheating lest the effects devastate dairy farmers' bottom line. A study published by NYSERDA concludes:

“If peak milk production is decreased by only 2 pounds per day, as might be seen under mild heat stress, 400 to 500 pounds of milk could be lost for the lactation period. This would amount to a \$48 to \$60 loss per cow at the current milk price of \$12 per 100 pounds of milk.” [16]

Any savings, no matter how small, can compound into a significant boost in long-term income when considering the inherent time scales in the dairy industry. Extra funds can be used to for capital investments, to pay off debt, or to simply hold on until better times.

Placing wind turbines on grazing land does not preclude their continued use for feeding animals, nor does it preclude planting crops up to the turbine's base [17]. It is also likely that crop output would not be completely displaced in favor of solar panels, as it can be anticipated that farmers will lease land only insofar as the marginal benefit exceeds foregone crop profits, and because much land already goes fallow since there often isn't enough labor to work it [10]. Also, leasing turbines and installing solar panels is already commonly practiced as a means of generating additional income [4].

Also noteworthy is the fact that this policy does not increase milk output, whose effect would be to drive down market prices and perpetuate a vicious cycle that exacerbates market conditions. This policy simply provides greater return on resources that farmers do not already utilize to the fullest extent, such as their land, the wind that flows over it, and the manure their cows produce. The state could enable farmers to accomplish this through a variety of avenues, such as by subsidizing the purchase of solar and wind technologies by the

farmer, negotiating rates for the leasing of land from farmers by wind or solar corporations and cooperatives, or subsidizing the leasing of wind turbines and solar panels directly farmers to sell power to the grid. Needless to say, the policy avenue or combination of avenues pursued would have huge implication for the cost of such a program; subsidizing direct purchases of solar and wind technologies by farmers, be it through tax expenditures, state grants, or the like, would incur the most costs and be most administratively demanding than the latter two options, for instance.

Such a proposal would also prove a boon to those companies that manufacture, transport, and install solar- and wind-power hardware throughout the state, also improving the communities surrounding those firms than manufacture, transport and install such hardware. According to NYSERDA, Job growth in the clean energy sector is 3.4% annually, faster than the 1.9% state average across industries, and more than 100,000 people are directly employed in the development and installation of green energy hardware. Approximately three-quarters of all such firms conduct business primarily within New York State, indicating they already have the experience and expertise to work in conjunction with the state, reducing time and costs necessary for this policy to succeed [12]. This policy would drive existing growth in a rapidly growing industry in our state, benefiting in-state manufacturers of wind turbines, such as General Electric, and photovoltaic panels, such as Solar City.

That being said, there exist the challenges posed by the upfront costs necessary to pay for such a program, which will likely result in backlash by others in the state seeing as how agriculture, while it serves as the foundation for the communities that house millions in upstate and Long Island, only directly comprises 0.2 percent of the state's GDP. It should be noted, however, that dairy farming has the highest job multiplier of any industry in the state; for every job created in dairy farming, 4.72 are created in other industries [3]. Also problematic is the fact that solar power does not provide a consistent source of energy that can be stored long term; the dependability of wind energy can be even more capricious [18, 19]. New developments in battery technology will likely abet such insecurity, but until sufficient innovation has occurred, farmers will likely have to continue to rely on the grid when their own energy production falls short of demand. Australian dairy farmers have also coped with such concerns by adjusting milking times to match peak wind and solar energy cycles [18]. Meanwhile, AD, while providing a more consistent source of energy, has significantly higher installation and maintenance costs and is only ideal for dairy operations with more than one hundred cows [16, 19, 20].

One will notice that little has been said thus far concerning the adoption of AF technology. This is because the state will have to take great care not to bias renewable energy promotion in favor of larger farms; most cow farms in New York have less than 200 cows, so a more substantial increase in savings is necessary for such farms to reap benefits of scale. The state should

therefore adopt this policy in two phases, the first promoting such a transition on smaller farms so as to improve their competitiveness, coinciding with a federal effort to improve US dairy exports abroad, and the second involving greater investments in AD technologies. While the first phase is conducted, the state should consider promoting research to improve the efficiency with which AD technology harnesses gases from manure and to reduce the costs necessary to construct and maintain such projects [21].

On the whole, the Southern Tier would be an ideal location to test implement this policy. The institutional precedent for enacting energy policy in just the Southern Tier is strong, as NYSERDA already operates on a regional basis, dividing the state into development councils. The region has the most consistent wind energy potential of any development council (see figure 5), meaning greater ease in installation and maintenance due to the potential for constancy in turbine models. The region also lacks the concentration of AD technology present in the Finger Lakes and Western New York, serving as a clean slate to test a new model for the promotion of the technology (see figure 6). The region as a whole has also witnessed widespread population decline (see figure 2) and stands to benefit from clean energy job growth more than any other developmental council region (see figure 7). The benefits imbued by the policy would be felt throughout Southern Tier and the state as a whole, and if the project is successful, it should be adapted for application in other developmental council regions, serving as an

example for other states to follow.

Next Steps

If implemented correctly, this policy would affirm New York's commitment to a diverse, renewable-energy driven economy, bringing it one significant step closer to its goal of being 50% renewable-energy-reliant by 2050. This policy addresses the need for requisite space for renewable energy technologies will require in order for the state to reach this goal, as approximately one-quarter of the State's land in state is for agriculture [4]. In addition, this policy proactively addresses the greater future importance of reducing energy costs by New York's dairy farmers as the effects of climate change increasingly necessitate greater spending on energy to keep herds cool. Furthermore, the extra revenue provided by selling excess energy would help put small dairy farmers back in the black or, at the very least, sustain their operation until market conditions are ameliorated by international trade policy.

Hence, this policy would be incomplete without a commensurate effort by the federal government to improve the long-term prospects of US dairy exports. In the long run, the financial security of New York's farmers can only be assured if an international marketplace more congenial to American agricultural exports is guaranteed. East and South Asia are proving to be promising markets for US dairy exports as personal wealth increases in those regions, and there is potential for the proposed USMCA to increase US dairy exports to Canada and Mexico [24, 25].

In the meantime, the exact details of how to administer this

policy must be determined. The state has a strong precedent of promoting the construction of renewable energy infrastructure, whether it be through tax expenditures, NYS Green Fund grants, or state-sponsored research and development. It will be necessary to determine the policy mix necessary to execute this policy, but if the state can successfully enable the Southern Tier to become an experimental zone for such a policy mix, the result would be improved prospects for an industry that dominates New York's agricultural sector and stands as a pillar of a robust Upstate economy. This policy mix could serve as a model for development in other regions in the state, and even other states, affirming New York's role as a leader in the promotion of America's renewable-energy-dominated future.

Talking Points

- About 1/5 of energy-based expenses for cow farming owes to electricity costs [20].
- According to a study from Cornell University's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, if AD systems were used to collect gases from just half of New York's milking cows, it would have the effect of removing 225,000 cars' worth of Carbon Dioxide emissions annually [19].
- Methane, the primary gas harnessed by AD, has 34 times the global warming potential of carbon dioxide [19].
- New York's clean energy job growth is 3.4% annually, compared to the 1.9%

average job growth rate [12].

- More than 100,000 people are directly employed in the development and installation of green energy hardware [12].
- The dairy industry has the highest job multiplier of any industry in the state; for every job created, 4.72 are created in other industries [3].

Action Plan Snapshot

Some of Cornell University's faculty, such as Curt Gooch and the rest of Cornell's PRO-DAIRY Program's members, are among the most renowned in the fields of environmental and agricultural studies and might serve to provide further expertise to us and policymakers. This policy will be presented to Congressman Paul Tonko of New York's 20th Congressional District. His status as one of Congress' most outspoken advocates for both renewable energy development and dairy farmers alike make him a valuable ally and mentor. Tonko is also the former president of NYSERDA and would prove indispensable in any effort to refine and promote this policy within that agency. We must also press for promotion of this policy by state legislators from throughout the Southern Tier, such as Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton and Senator Thomas O'Mara, and foster an alliance between them and those representing renewable energy manufacturing bases, such as Assemblyman Angelo Santabarbara and Senator Jim Tedisco.

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The Public School Failure: Raising Wages for Illinois Teachers to Help Students

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Illinois public school teachers are underpaid, which means high quality candidates are less inclined to pursue careers in public education in the state of Illinois. If the state required a minimum starting pay of \$40,000 and supplemented struggling districts with state funding acquired through raising, and potentially altering, the income tax or amending the pension clause in its Constitution, then state funding of public education can increase and teacher pay will be uniformly higher across the state, improving education outcomes.

Background

Teachers are unappreciated and underpaid. In 2018, Illinois Governor Rauner vetoed Senate Bill 2892, which would make the minimum full-time public school teacher salary \$40,000 by 2022 [1]. A higher starting salary attracts qualified candidates into the public school system. The average starting salary for Illinois teachers in 2018 is \$38,820 but it varies by district [2]. In 2017-2018, the lowest starting salary for Illinois teachers holding a bachelor's degree was \$26,768 in Farrington CCSD 99, while the highest was \$57,905 in Northfield Twp. HSD 225 [3]. This disparity is caused by the source of public school funding—property taxes.

The highest teacher starting salary in Illinois barely surpasses the \$50,000 average starting salary for a 2017 four-year college graduate [4]. In 2017, the overall average Illinois teacher salary was only \$64,516 [5]. 13.9 percent of Illinois teachers report holding second jobs in 2014 to supplement their income [6]. Saddled with similar debt, about \$37,172 [7], and degrees, high-quality teachers will pursue careers outside of Illinois. In 2018, 80 percent of Illinois school

districts report a teacher shortage and, subsequently, a decline in teacher quality [8].

Teacher quality positively affects students. A young student who has a good teacher, as opposed to an average teacher, for four or five years in a row experiences an increased level of learning, which is enough to close the learning gap that exists between the low-income student receiving a free lunch and the average student [9]. Seeing the link between teacher quality and student learning, the shortage of teachers and their diminishing quality in Illinois is a net loss of social welfare. Every child deserves a quality education and, if the public school system fails to attract qualified applicants, then the state is gambling with its future.

Policy Idea

Currently, the public school system market in Illinois has failed. The starting teacher salary is too low, attracting fewer applicants and those of a lower quality than what would be desired. In order to correct the market failure, a higher wage must be offered. The disparity of teacher wages across district lines should also be eliminated in order to

more uniformly distribute high quality teachers across the state.

This can be accomplished by increasing state funding for teacher wages and distributing it accordingly to benefit the most impoverished students by supplementing low property tax revenue. Additionally, the federal government can assist by changing the guidelines and limitations for teacher loan forgiveness.

Policy Analysis

Illinois does not adequately contribute to public school funds. Illinois contributes less than 20 percent of the necessary funding for public schools—the national average is 45 percent state contribution—landing Illinois the 50th rank for state contribution to public schools [10]. Public school state funding in Illinois is regressive—high-poverty districts receive 73 percent of the funding given to low-poverty districts, worsening the situation [11]. This disparity perpetuates the poverty cycle—wealthier districts have the best teachers and materials and poorer districts are left to the wayside. Teachers' salaries make up

60 percent of public education spending and are largely determined by local funding, meaning teachers will seek employment in wealthier districts instead of those that need more high-quality teachers [12].

If a minimum starting wage of \$40,000 was to be adopted across the state, then poorer districts could compete with wealthier districts. Since this is a minimum and not subsidy, wealthier districts will likely pay the same in wages since state funding will go towards only low-income districts, specifically those whose teachers earn less than the \$40,000 starting salary level, in order to supplement their local tax contributions and alleviate funding concerns. Of the 852 school districts in Illinois, 845 reported their starting salaries for 2017-2018 to the Illinois State Board of Education. The average starting salary, bachelor's and master's combined, is below \$40,000 in 408 districts [3]. If funding were given to each of these districts to supplement their average wage, an estimated \$1,507,785 would be needed in funds.

Illinois can raise revenue in a number of ways to give the state more money to spend on public schools. 25 percent of all tax dollars go towards state employee health insurance and pension plans, leaving 75 percent to divide amongst all state services [13]. By 2025, more state designated education funding will be spent on pensions than in the classroom [14]. The Illinois Constitution protects state employee pension plans, but it should be altered to only protect existing accrued benefits; the retirement age should be raised, most teachers retire before 60, and a less generous COLA adjustment should be adopted since the current

one compounds 3 percent annually [15].

The Illinois public school system is inherently regressive since property taxes are regressive. Illinois has a flat income tax, which, while also regressive, is less regressive than property taxes, so if the state increased income taxes under the current system that could fund schools more progressively. However, Illinois's tax system is the 5th worst in the nation, combining state and local taxes, since the bottom 20% of earners pay 13.2% of their income in taxes and the top 1% only pay 4.6% [16]. If Illinois was to adopt a graduated income tax system under a structure proposed by the Center for Tax and Budget Accountability, the state could raise an additional \$2.4 billion in revenue, some of which could be spent on education [17]. When the state cut funding during the recession, local districts across the state were forced to raise property taxes to compensate for the drop in state education funding so the return of funding would help these areas [18]. The prioritization of low-income areas will provide greater equality in education.

The Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program also offers an incentive for teachers; however, it only forgives a maximum of \$5,000 or \$17,500 of certain loans for teachers who have taught for five years at a qualifying low income school [19]. The average student debt is \$37,172, so the amount forgiven is insufficient, especially if the teacher specializes in the liberal arts and only gets \$5,000 forgiven instead of the extra \$12,500 that is awarded to STEM or special education teachers [19]. The teacher student loans should reflect the current levels of student debt, not

penalize humanities teachers, and more accurately account for the wage disparity between low- and high- income areas, which is greater than \$5,000-\$17,500.

Next Steps

The most immediate benefit to teachers would be increasing the minimum starting wage since that will defray the costs of education and draw highly qualified teachers into lower income areas. Additionally, reforming the teacher loan forgiveness program will have a similar effect in attracting recent graduates and convincing new students to pursue the teaching profession. These changes would immediately affect the quality of applicants and general distribution of high-quality teachers throughout the state—especially in poorer rural regions.

The most immediate source of increased state funding to provide for this change would likely come from alterations in the income tax system. Illinois residents would welcome a change in the income tax system since it would reduce the burden of regressive and highly unfair property taxes and redistribute wealth throughout the state in a manner that would benefit low-income districts [20]. Amending the Illinois constitution will also help work to reduce the state's massive debt burden for subsequent generations.

If requiring a minimum starting teacher wage and having the state make up the difference for low income districts is successful in Illinois, then a similar plan can be enacted nationwide to improve teacher wages and distribute teachers evenly across state lines. In this scenario, the federal government can provide funding for

impoverished states with the lowest teacher wages and supplement the difference in wages for those states.

Action Plan Snapshot

Teachers unions would most likely favor this plan since raising the minimum starting pay could potentially increase average pay across the state and help new teachers. Additionally, any Illinois taxpayer would certainly favor the plan to amend the pension clause to allow for diminishment of benefits so that their tax dollars can be spent on government programs like education instead of giving retired public workers millions in lifetime retirement benefits [15]. Low income families would be in favor of a graduated income tax since it would reduce their income tax burden [17]. Parents, especially those in lower-income districts, will also recognize that their children receive a higher quality of education when teachers are paid more and will support the increase in state funding for school districts to increase the minimum starting teacher wage.

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The Collegetown Housing Crisis: Slumlords, Passive Enforcement, and a Negligent University

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Many students at Cornell University decide to live off-campus since housing is not guaranteed beyond sophomore year. Due to the limited supply of housing both on and off-campus, the housing market in Collegetown^[1] is a prime location for slumlords^[2] to take advantage of desperate college students searching for reasonable housing. In order to combat this situation, Cornell should work with Ithaca to develop a landlord registry that records landlord information and properties as well as performs routine inspections to certify that housing meets all current codes and habitability standards. Cornell should also expand its off-campus housing support by creating a litigation office where students can go to report landlord misconduct (i.e. retainment of security deposits).

Background

Cornell University has very limited on-campus housing, only guaranteeing housing on campus for freshmen and sophomore students. Juniors, seniors, transfers, and graduate students are not guaranteed on-campus housing due to limited supply and high demand [1]. Therefore, many students begin living off campus in the surrounding area as early as sophomore year. Many students live in Collegetown, the small town between the university and downtown Ithaca while others live off-campus below West Campus. Some students even explore housing options as far away as downtown Ithaca (near Ithaca Commons). However, housing in the surrounding areas is also in short supply; many houses are residential for Ithaca locals or professors, and several houses are not zoned properly to be leased out as apartments. Of the remaining

houses available to be rented out, many are old and poorly maintained. Despite poor quality, even median-priced housing in Collegetown is often cheaper than living off campus^[1], prompting students to ignore the quality of the available apartments [2]. This supply shortage has allowed local landlords to price-gouge rent and neglect routine property maintenance since students have nowhere else to live. Although Cornell does provide a database for students to search through apartment listings, many listings do not meet minimum requirements [3].

A non-scientific survey of Cornell students showed that when asked about the general housing situation in Collegetown, the average response was a 3.545 with a standard deviation of 1.782 on a scale of 1 to 10 (where 1 is worst and 10 is best) [12]. This statistic

shows that students think fairly poorly of the housing situation in Collegetown. The survey also suggests that the overall satisfaction with the Collegetown housing situation is in some way correlated to how students feel about their landlords (with a potential emerging correlation between overall satisfaction and apartment quality in a survey with a larger sample size). According to the Department of Numbers (whose cost estimates run high), the survey results are actually low; the average monthly rent in Ithaca, NY, in 2016 was \$997, which is nearly \$100 more than a comparable college town (non-metropolitan) like Providence, RI (Brown University), whose average monthly rent in 2016 was just over \$900 [4]. According to the same source, the national average for monthly rent was about \$981 in 2016, but removing outliers such as New York City, Boston,

Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, and San Francisco would suggest that the true national average for non-metropolitan areas is actually significantly lower, making Ithaca rent seem much higher than reasonable.

Policy Idea

Part 1:

Cornell University should work with the City of Ithaca to create a landlord registry. This registry would require all landlords to provide information about how long they have been leasing properties, how many properties they own, and other relevant information as well as contact information in case of emergency. The registry would also enforce up-to-date codes and safety requirements (i.e. sprinkler systems, functional locks, etc.) Stricter enforcement and higher expectations for habitability standards would force landlords to perform routine maintenance, such as regular replacement of rusted pipes and/or broken appliances.

Part 2:

Cornell University should establish a new office within its Office of Off-Campus Living to assist students with the legal problems of living off-campus. Problems between students and landlords, such as landlords failing to make timely repairs, are often difficult for students to mitigate. This sub-office would specifically be in charge of mediating situations between landlords and students, and this office would also assist students with litigation. Issues such as retainment of security deposits occur frequently but are too hard to for most students to litigate on their own. An Office of Legal Assistance

for Off-Campus Living would help resolve many of the landlord-tenant issues that arise when students move off campus.

Part 3:

Cornell University should provide bus passes to all upperclassmen. Transportation to and from campus is one of the biggest issues that prevent students from living farther away from campus in much less expensive parts of Ithaca (on-campus parking is hard to find and demand is once again greater than supply, and parking permits are expensive). Providing bus passes would enable students to live closer to the Ithaca Commons near bus stops that go directly to campus on a pre-determined schedule.

Policy Analysis

Part 1:

Cornell University already has a landlord database to assist students with finding housing off-campus, but this database does not include information about landlords and does not require landlords and properties to meet certain levels of habitability [5]. The university has also collaborated with the Building Division of the City of Ithaca to display the safety information of each rental property, but safety is merely reported, not enforced to a reasonable standard [6]. Based on the survey of Cornell students, as previously noted, there is some emerging correlation ($r^2 = 0.272$) between how students feel about their housing situation and how students feel about their landlord. There is also an emerging correlation between a landlord's treatment of tenants and how the tenants feel about the landlord. There is a correlation (of $r^2 = 0.315$)

between landlords invading their tenants' privacy and tenant rating of the landlord and ($r^2 = 0.447$) between landlords failing to make timely repairs and the tenant rating of the landlord [12]. If landlords are required to have a certain degree of transparency in their role as property-owners, it could potentially allow students an easier way to notice and report landlord misconduct and failure to make repairs by communicating with other tenants as well as having information about the landlord readily available. Furthermore, enforcing standards of habitability would hopefully prevent landlords from letting apartments fall into dilapidation and would force them to make repairs within a reasonable timeframe (as well as at a reasonable time). Failure to maintain these expectations would theoretically lead to legal and pecuniary consequences worse than any expenses incurred by routine maintenance and repairs. By improving the standard of living among landlords such that landlords must be held more accountable for their properties, student satisfaction with housing would hopefully increase as students become more satisfied with their landlords. New York State (NYS) also requires that landlords maintain a "Warranty of Habitability" where tenants have the right to a "livable, safe and sanitary apartment," which seems to be unenforced by the City of Ithaca or Cornell University since students generally believe that the housing situation in Collegetown in about a 3.545 on a scale of 1 to 10 (where 1 is worst and 10 is best) with a standard deviation of 1.782 [8][12]. Overall, the creation of a landlord database should ultimately increase landlord accountability and enforce

that landlords maintain a reasonable standard of habitability in all of their apartments, as well as fully adhere to all NYS codes (outlined in [8], section V, p.17-27).

Theoretically, based on the correlation in the survey, improving landlord conduct and apartment quality would be the first step toward improving the housing situation in Collegetown.

Part 2:

By establishing an Office of Legal Assistance for Off-Campus Living (OLA-OCL), students would have easy access to a mediator for any legal issues, including those alluded to in Part 1. Attorneys within the OLA-OCL would act as mediators for students who are having trouble with their landlords (i.e. the landlord fails to make repairs or meet required safety standards). By having a third-party involved in the landlord-tenant interaction, landlords would face additional pressure to meet legal/required habitability standards and NYS codes. As one student responded in the survey, “[l]andlords rely on the apathy and inexperience of students to get away with constant minor violations knowing students won't litigate,” clearly indicating that having a third-party enforcement of landlord accountability would lessen the pressure on students who do not know what violations to report or how to do so [12].

Third-party involvement may also mitigate any risk of landlord retaliation against tenants who make “good faith complaints” to local government organizations in order to resolve any violations of safety or habitability standards [8, Section VIII, p.25]. Landlord retaliation to these types of complaints is also forbidden under NYS law [8].

Another complicated legal measure

that is frequently experienced in Collegetown is retainment of security deposits, and the OLA-OCL would provide legal experts to either litigate the proceeding or guide the student through the process. The NYS Attorney General does provide a mediation service for tenants who have had their security deposits retained, but the process is so long and tedious that many students do not take action against the landlord misconduct [7][12]. The OLA-OCL would provide Cornell students with a means to bring legal action against landlords who are improperly retaining security deposits (among other violations). Overall, creating an Office of Legal Assistance would enable students to hold landlords accountable for any violations (major or minor) via a third-party who is familiar with the law while simultaneously mitigating risk of landlord retaliation directly against a tenant. This would hopefully further increase landlord accountability and enable students to have an indirect role in enforcing that their landlords adhere to safety and habitability standards, which would theoretically increase the overall housing satisfaction as students become more satisfied with their landlords and apartment quality.

Part 3:

Generally, apartments become less expensive with more included utilities the farther away from Cornell's campus the apartment is located [5][9]. However, living farther away from campus has many negative consequences: on-campus parking permits are expensive and people who drive to campus often have to arrive before 9:00 am to find a reasonably close parking spot; landlords often lease parking

spaces for a similar fee to on-campus permits; and bus passes are not included for Cornell students after freshman year [12]. The transportation difficulty seems to drive students within walking distance from the university, creating high demand within the small area of Collegetown. Supply is also concentrated with the general area of Collegetown, thereby generating a housing market that is artificially super-competitive. This market drives up rent costs and incentivizes landlords to charge exorbitant rent without fear of losing tenants because tenants have no other desirable, convenient location in which to live. If the university were to provide free bus passes to all students, the supply of affordable housing would expand to include housing options farther away from the university, potentially favoring newer, less expensive housing near the Ithaca Commons. With bus passes, students would be able to get to campus quickly via bus stops in the Commons, incentivizing them to live farther away. This would then shift the concentration of demand away from Collegetown, forcing landlords to lower their prices to compete with the cheaper housing options farther away from campus. This part of the policy solution would lower the average rent in Collegetown to a more reasonable amount for college students (compared to the current average of \$822.44 \$215.46, not including utilities) [12]. In terms of cost to the university, the OmniRide bus pass that provides Cornell University students with unlimited TCAT rides on any route costs \$200 for the entire year [10]. Not including financial aid, each student pays \$72,754 for one year at

Cornell, which means that providing an OmniRide bus pass to all students (only 0.275% of total tuition), would be an insignificant loss the university (which has an endowment of \$7.2 billion) [11]. Therefore, the university should be able to provide bus passes for all undergraduate students without incurring much expense.

Next Steps

Based on the policy analysis, the implementation of this policy would be highly beneficial to resolve the situation in Collegetown where landlords seem to be taken advantage of college students who either do not know any better, do not have the resources to take further action, or are afraid of landlord retaliation should they try to report landlord violations. Further research should also be conducted to elucidate the findings in the smaller survey. With a larger sample size and more controls, a refined scientific survey would reveal the true trends between landlords, rent, apartment quality, and overall satisfaction. More research would also enforce preliminary findings of emerging trends, enabling the proposed policy to be more refined to fit the specific aspects of the Collegetown housing crisis that most affect students. Overall, this policy approaches the three major problems that seem to be at the root of the Collegetown Housing crisis: slumlords, legal enforcement, and exorbitant rent. Though it could be refined with further research, implementing this policy would improve the housing situation in Collegetown.

Key Facts

- The average monthly rent payment, not including

additional utilities, is about \$822.44 in the Collegetown area according to the survey, and only 57.6% of respondents' rent payments include hot water (and only 43.9% included gas for cooking/heat). Based on the results of the survey, nearly 45% of students living in Collegetown pay at least \$850 per month in rent not including additional expenses for utilities.

- Some particularly poignant survey comments include:
 - "... they tricked us into signing a stipulation on our lease that says they only have to give 24 hours notice. They still do not even stick to this. They did this to manipulate us into resigning sooner, they already knew we were resigning..."
 - "Landlords rely on the apathy and inexperience of students to get away with constant minor violations knowing students won't litigate"
 - "Front door was broken for four days, we were climbing in and out of a window"
 - "My landlord routinely gives keys to real estate Avants to show the property to potential buyers, including keys to our individual rooms, without giving adequate notice to all tenants. One instance I found out through a text by my roommate that there were people in the house. I was recently showered and rushing to put on clothes when they knocked on my door. I loudly asked them not to come in and they did anyway."
 - "... I had to go through NYS attorney general to get my security deposit back."

- Landlords take advantage of college students who are generally not aware of the NYS landlord-tenant laws, and many students are afraid to confront their landlords out of fear of retaliation or genuinely not knowing that NYS law requires landlords to provide a reason level of habitability
- Landlords tend to retain security deposits knowing that students will not go through the process and effort to litigate, but they do not use the money to make necessary repairs: they simply pocket the money and ignore even routine maintenance

Talking Points

- Cornell University should work with the City of Ithaca to develop a landlord registry that also serves to enforce safety and habitability standards
- Cornell should create an Office of Legal Assistance within its Office of Off-Campus Housing to support students with any legal issues related to living off-campus, including:
 - Litigation to have security deposit returned
 - Mediation of conflicts between landlord and tenant related to repairs or other issues
- Cornell should provide bus passes to all students to enable students to live in less expensive housing farther away from campus without having to worry about daily transportation to and from campus
- The current housing situation in Collegetown is unacceptable and run by slumlords without any acknowledgement from Cornell or the City of Ithaca, and some policy must be

implemented to enforce the expectations of safety and habitability standards as well as prosecute other violations and provide students with a third-party through which to process and mediate "good faith" complaints

Action Plan Snapshot

The process for implementing this policy would be as follows:

1. Speak to the Economics department at Cornell University to set up further research to substantiate the initial survey findings.
2. Organize a team of other students from a variety of backgrounds and housing situations to support this issue. Going forward, the policy would be stronger from a unified team rather than one individual.
3. Meet with professors in Cornell Law School to learn more specific details of NYS landlord-tenant law and ensure that all team members fully understand implications of the potential proposal.
4. Find Cornell faculty to support the policy and help further refine the policy and steps for implementation.
5. Develop a mock-registry so that the final presentation of the proposal includes a physical (or in this case,

digital) example of what the policy would look like when implemented.

6. Meet with the Building Division of the City of Ithaca to learn the specific details of how an apartment passes inspection. Enumerate the components of the inspection and NYS regulations that would govern the "safety and habitability standards" that would be enforced through the registry.
7. Meet with the Office of Off-Campus Living to learn what legal services are already available for students and determine the feasibility of adding an Office of Legal Assistance.
8. Arrange a meeting with head faculty (potentially the university President) to discuss the implementation of this policy and affirm the support of Cornell University before continuing to the City of Ithaca. Discuss the option to provide bus passes to all Cornell students.
9. Submit the proposal to the City of Ithaca and speak before the city council/mayor about the policy proposal and impact.
10. Implement the proposal and begin rectifying the Collegetown Housing Crisis.

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Under the Shadow of the Law: Migrant Workers and Labour Dispute Litigation Costs in the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone

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Migrant workers in the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone face systemic economic exploitation by employers. As such, they are the primary initiators of labour dispute cases in Shenzhen. In China, the legal litigation framework serves as the most equitable avenue for resolution of labour dispute issues. Due to the influx of labour dispute cases into an already inundated court system, compounded by the reluctance of courts to accept labour cases due to low filing fees, this policy proposes to increase court fees to 3% of the petitioning worker's annual salary, leaving employers to bear the initial cost. This policy will serve to alleviate the strains on the court system and provide equitable recourse for migrant workers.

Background

In 1890, the town of Shenzhen was designated as one of four Special Economic Zones (SEZ) as part of Deng Xiaoping's "Reform and Opening-Up" (改革开放; *gǎigé kāifàng*). Due to pro-business and pro-investment policies, Shenzhen experienced immense economic growth, largely driven by foreign investment. However, this prosperity has come with hidden costs—namely, the influx of hundreds of thousands of low-income migrant workers into the city.² As a result of the

household registration (户口; *hùkǒu*) system, migrants are not afforded state protections that are provided to Shenzhen citizens, such as education, medical care, housing, and welfare.³ If they lose their job, they are forced to leave the city.⁴ Even though the basic wage is low in the Shenzhen SEZ, the higher wages paid in the city still far outstrip those paid in outlying rural areas—migrants are able to earn salaries double or even quadruple what they could previously.⁵ Hence, migrants have little choice but to migrate. As a result, migrant

workers become dependent on their employers, thus resulting in frequent labour abuses including confiscation of documents, harsh living and working conditions, as well as unpaid overtime.⁶ Consequently, measures should be enacted to protect these workers, as they have little bargaining power in and of themselves due to the labour-capital imbalance in Shenzhen.⁷ Due to the "high standards, low enforcement" nature of Chinese labour law, seeking a regulatory approach to the issue would likely be ineffective.⁸ Thus, reform should be

¹ Zai Liang, "Foreign Investment, Economic Growth, and Temporary Migration: The Case of Shenzhen Special Economic Zone, China," *Development and Society* 28, no. 1 (1999): 115-37; Jai S Mah, "Foreign Direct Investment Inflows and Economic Development: The Case of Shenzhen Special Economic Zone in China," *The Journal of World Investment and Trade* 9(4), (2008): 319-31.

² Anna T.P. Yung and Ng Sek Hong, "A New Brand of the Individual Labour Contract under Market Socialism: Case Studies in the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone of China," *International Journal of Employment Studies* 16, no. 1 (2008): 1-47; Li Tao et al.,

"Housing Choices of Migrant Workers in China: Beyond the *Hukou* Perspective," *Habitat International* 49, (2015): 474-83.

³ Pun Ngai, "Women Workers and Precarious Employment in Shenzhen Special Economic Zone, China," *Gender and Development* 12, no. 2 (2004): 29-36, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4030611>.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Sonoko Nishitatenno, "China's Special Economic Zones: Experimental Units for Economic Reform," *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (1983): 175-85, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/759472>; Zai, "Foreign Investment, Economic Growth," 126.

⁶ Li, "Housing Choices," 474-83; Ngai, "Women Workers," 33-35.

⁷ Yung, "Individual Labour Contract," 28-32; Anna T.P. Yung, "Labour Dispute Resolution in the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone," *China Information* 23, no. 2 (2009): 257-84, doi:10.1177/0920203X09105127.

⁸ Mary E. Gallagher, "China's Workers Movement & the End of the Rapid-Growth Era," *Daedalus* 143, no. 2 (2014): 83; see also Eli Friedman and Sarosh Kuruvilla, "Experimentation and Decentralization in China's Labour Relations," *Human Relations* 68, no.2 (2015): 181-195.

focused on a different area—the labour dispute resolution system, and particularly, labour litigation.

Policy Idea

Chinese labour dispute litigation is not conducted through employment tribunals or industrial relations courts, but handled by the civil court system.⁹ In Shenzhen, court fees for acceptance of labour dispute cases are exceedingly low compared to those for other civil cases—specifically, 10-50 RMB, or approximately \$1.5 – \$7.21.¹⁰ As a result, Chinese civil courts are reluctant to take on these cases.¹¹ Thus, the fee should be raised to 3% of the petitioning worker’s annual salary in order to bring the fee in line with those charged for other civil cases, thereby inducing courts to accept a greater number of labour dispute cases.¹² To mitigate the burden on workers and decrease the barrier of entry, the employer should bear this cost.

Policy Analysis

In the Chinese labour dispute resolution system, labour litigation serves as the last resort for workers seeking redress of grievances.¹³ Prior to litigation, workers must first undergo compulsory arbitration, and before

⁹ Shen Jie, “The Chinese Labour Litigation System and Its Role in Settling Labour Disputes,”

International Journal of Employment Studies 16, no.1 (2008): 86-87.

¹⁰ Xiao Jianguo and Tang Xin, “Cost and Fee Allocation in Civil Procedure: China National Report,”

(presentation, 2010 Congress of the International Academy of Comparative Law, Washington D.C., July 2010), 67.

¹¹ Shen, “The Chinese Labour Litigation System,” 87.

¹² Xiao and Tang, “Cost and Fee Allocation in Civil Procedure,” 66.

¹³ Yung, “Labour Dispute Resolution,” 264.

that, are highly encouraged to settle the dispute through conciliation and mediation.¹⁴ However, mediation committees are uncommon, dealing with only 10% of labour cases annually.¹⁵ Furthermore, these committees are established and controlled by enterprises and the government-controlled trade union, and are thus generally ineffective in addressing labour disputes fairly due to conflicts of interest.¹⁶ As a result, the number of successful mediation cases has dropped precipitously from 107,439 in 1996 to only 5,825 in 2001.¹⁷ On the other hand, arbitration committees are formed by the local labour bureau with three arbitrators total, from the labour administration, the trade union, and the employer respectively.¹⁸ Parties to the dispute are not allowed to select arbitrators,¹⁹ and the final arbitration award is legally enforceable.²⁰ However, the arbitration system is highly flawed, as arbitrators often have severe conflicts of interest that prevent them from protecting workers to the fullest extent.²¹ They often have

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 265-69.

¹⁵ Shen, “The Chinese Labour Litigation System,” 85.

¹⁶ Fu Hualing and D.W. Choy, “From Mediation to Adjudication: Settling Labour Disputes in China,” *China Rights Forum* no. 3 (2004): 18; Yung, “Labour Dispute Resolution,” 272-75. In contravention to labour law, many corporations form their mediation committees solely with representatives from management. However, even when workers and trade union representatives were included, conflicts of interest abounded—for example, in many corporations, the trade union representative was a vice president of the company.

¹⁷ Fu and Choy, “From Mediation to Adjudication,” 18.

¹⁸ Yung, “Labour Dispute Resolution,” 266.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Shen, “The Chinese Labour Litigation System,” 85.

²¹ Yung, “Labour Dispute Resolution,” 276.

close ties with the Communist Party and corporations, and thus have vested interests in promoting labour stability.²² As such, arbitration decisions disproportionately favour management in labour disputes.²³

Consequently, due to the lack of fair settlement, the courts have largely become the only mechanism for fair settlement of labour disputes. While the courts’ jurisdictions are necessarily limited to cases that an arbitration committee has rendered a final decision on, courts have greater powers than arbitration committees and are able to bring the case to final resolution.²⁴

Additionally, as previously mentioned, Chinese labour litigation is conducted apart from the formal labour dispute resolution system, and are instead handled by civil courts; as such, unlike with mediation and arbitration committees, the government retains and exerts less influence.²⁵ In recent years, the number of labour disputes settled through the Chinese court system has risen considerably, as workers have begun to reject official mechanisms for labour dispute resolution and have increasingly turned to the legal system for recourse.²⁶ Between 1995 and 2004, the amount of cases soared from 28,285 to 114, 997—an astonishing 257% increase.²⁷

Around 40% of labour arbitration cases in Guangdong province are initiated in Shenzhen, and the

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Fu and Choy, “From Mediation to Adjudication,” 20.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

²⁵ *Cf.* *Ibid.*, 20-21.

²⁶ See Gallagher, “China’s Workers Movement & the End of the Rapid-Growth Era,” 81-95.

²⁷ Shen, “The Chinese Labour Litigation System,” 91.

majority deal with migrant workers.

²⁸ Employees are heavily favoured to win once the dispute reaches litigation. For example, out of 425,726 cases total, in Shandong province, workers won 62.46% of cases; in Guangdong, 55.88%, and in Heilongjiang, 55.32%.²⁹ In certain courts, such as Ningbo in Zhejiang, as well as Zhongshan in Guangdong, workers prevailed over 90% of the time.³⁰ This indicates that the court system is largely an equitable method of adjudicating labour disputes.

Yet despite the large increase in court-adjudicated labour disputes, barriers to case acceptance by the courts remain. One of the primary barriers relates to the issue of court fees. As mentioned previously, court fees for labour disputes are fixed at 10-50 RMB.³¹ Chinese courts depend on court fees to augment their stipends for operational costs, and are thus reluctant to accept labour dispute cases on this basis.³² Furthermore, this low fee has allowed employers and employees alike to file significant numbers of frivolous lawsuits.³³ This has in turn caused courts to regard labour disputes as largely trivial and tedious matters.³⁴ Additionally, since the courts are overworked with other cases, accepting labour dispute cases is thus an extremely low priority.³⁵

As the courts are practically the only equitable avenue of recourse available to workers, increasing access is thus a necessity. Hence, by raising the fee rate to 3% of the petitioning worker's annual salary, acceptance of labour dispute cases would rise significantly. This rate is derived from the standard scale of court fees for civil cases, which stipulates that, "in cases dealing with values exceeding 10,000 RMB but not exceeding RMB 100,000, the acceptance fee shall be 2.5% of the exceeding part."³⁶ As the majority of Shenzhen workers' salaries—migrant or otherwise—fall between this range, a fee rate of 3% would be in line with this determination, while the additional 0.5% would further incentivize courts to accept labour cases.³⁷ Furthermore, placing the initial burden of fee payment on the employer is not unreasonable, considering that the "loser-pay-all" framework of the Chinese court system stipulates that the losing party must pay all court fees of both parties upon resolution of the dispute.³⁸ As such, enterprises would be able to recoup this cost if they prevail.

Next Steps

As the preceding analysis has shown, increasing court fees for labour dispute cases and shifting the initial burden of payment onto the employer would serve to induce courts to accept an increased number of labour cases, decrease the incidence of frivolous suits, and reduce barriers to litigation for migrant workers. While

implementation of this policy would only be a provisional stopgap measure as problems with *hukou* registration, the official labour dispute resolution mechanism, enforcement of labour laws, and other fundamental labour issues will need to be addressed in the long term with more sweeping policies of reform, implementation is a necessary step to prevent the court system from becoming overwhelmed and to democratize the litigation process. Hence, this policy should be referred to relevant policymakers in the Chinese government for expeditious implementation.

Talking Points

1. Due to weak enforcement of labour laws and the inadequacies of official labour dispute resolution mechanisms, the number of labour dispute cases referred to the courts has increased dramatically as workers have increasingly turned to the courts for fair resolution of labour disputes.
2. Court fees for labour dispute cases are extremely low relative to those for other civil cases (fixed at 10-50 RMB depending on jurisdiction).
3. The influx of court cases dealing with labour disputes can be attributed in part to the low filing fees. Furthermore, courts are reluctant to accept labour dispute cases, as they depend on court fees to cover operational costs.
4. Hence, raising the court fees for labour disputes to 3% of the petitioning worker's annual salary, to be paid by

²⁸ Fu and Choy, "From Mediation to Adjudication," 18.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 21.

³⁰ Shen, "The Chinese Labour Litigation System," 92.

³¹ Xiao and Tang, "Cost and Fee Allocation in Civil Procedure," 67.

³² Fu and Choy, "From Mediation to Adjudication," 21.

³³ *Ibid.*, 21-22.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Xiao and Tang, "Cost and Fee Allocation in Civil Procedure," 66-67.

³⁷ Ngai, "Women Workers," 33-35

³⁸ Xiao and Tang, "Cost and Fee Allocation in Civil Procedure," 45.

the employer, would resolve these problems and promote more efficacious and equitable resolution of labour disputes in the short term.

Action Plan Snapshot

Lobbying for implementation of this policy is not feasible due to the nature of the Chinese government and its legislative processes.

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Mandatory Retirement Enrollment as the Pillar of New York's Retiree Stability

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New York City is one of the most expensive places to live in America, with some of the highest housing, food, and transportation costs in the country. For retirees, who often face a significant amount of unexpected costs, particularly for medical reasons, it is crucial that they have the financial ability to weather these costs. Low levels of enrollment in retirement programs and unestablished savings habits means that many senior citizens in New York City, and the country as a whole, do not have financial solvency during retirement. Mandating automatic enrollment in retirement plans through an employer mandate would significantly improve the capacity and willingness of workers to save before retirement.

Background

Despite the massive costs, both expected and unexpected, that are associated with retirement, the vast majority of Americans are woefully unprepared financially. In 2013, 55 million workers, nearly half of private sector employers in the United States did not have access to an employer-sponsored retirement plan [1]. This lack of access also manifests itself in highly unequal ways; almost 90% of workers in the top income quintile had retirement savings, while less than 10% of workers in the bottom quintile did [2]. In New York City, 58% of workers over 55 do not have access to an employer-sponsored retirement account [10]. With almost 1/3 of New York City's one million senior citizens living in poverty, there is a crisis of retirement affordability in New York City [10].

Even amongst families that were fortunate enough to be able to save for retirement, the amount does not come anywhere near the sum

necessary to provide financial stability. In 2013, the median savings for families with retirement savings was \$60,000, far below the recommended savings of 10 times the pre-retirement salary [3]. Given that the cost of living in New York City is one of the highest in the nation, 22% higher than the national average, with average monthly living costs for a family of four being \$10,344, it is evident that most senior citizens do not have the required savings for retirement stability [11].

Furthermore, due to an aging population, and the pending retirement of much of the baby boomer generation, a strained Social Security and Medicare means that the financial stability that these programs previously provided to retirees is not as certain to be guaranteed to future generations. The Social Security and Medicare Trust Funds are projected to be depleted in 2034 and 2026, respectively, at which point benefits may be cut across the board and the retirement age may be raised [4,5].

Given the possibility that government retirement programs will be less stable in the future, it is critical that workers be given more of an ability to save early and consistently for their retirement.

Policy Idea

Similar to the employer mandate under the Affordable Care Act, this policy would mandate that all employers located in New York City enroll their full-time employees in a retirement-savings plan. Upon hiring full-time workers, employers would automatically enroll workers in an individual retirement, with portions of their salaries being deducted every payment period. Employees would be allowed to determine the amount of money that is deducted from their salaries, and could opt out of the program if they so desired. Employers would be required to cover the costs of the retirement plans. Furthermore, plan balances would be transferable between employers within New York City, so employees would be

able to roll over retirement benefits between different employers if they were to switch jobs. Employees transferring into New York City from another jurisdiction will be eligible to roll over any benefits from an existing employer-sponsored retirement plan, and employees transferring to a job outside of New York City will be eligible to roll over their benefits if their new employer permits it. If their new employer does not permit transferable benefits, the employees will be able to withdraw their savings without penalty.

Policy Analysis

Mandating employer coverage of retirement plans would better allow and incentivize workers to save for retirement in a sustainable manner. In particular, encouraging employees to begin saving early and consistently is crucial in order for people to be able to build a habit out of saving and accrue the benefits of compound interest [8]. The current lack of mandatory enrollment in retirement creates a situation in which workers often do not face strong incentives to begin investing early on, particularly when they begin to enter the workforce.

Firstly, automatically enrolling all employees in a retirement plan, where previously they would have had to opt in, would greatly reduce the inertia and complacency that causes workers not to retire in the first place. Researchers have found that “significant changes in savings behavior can be motivated simply by the “power of suggestion.” The “suggestion” of 401(k) participation through automatic enrollment leads to a large increase in the 401(k) participation rate” [6]. These

findings indicate that for a large number of employees, saving for retirement is not a matter of financial lacking but a matter of prioritization. Currently, the lack of employer sponsored retirement plans, and more importantly, the lack of mandatory enrollment in retirement plans, means that workers are more inclined to emphasize short term spending rather than save for retirement.

Secondly, this policy would increase the number of millennials who are able to save for retirement. Despite higher levels of education than previous generations, the percentage of millennials who currently work for employers who offer fringe benefits such as retirement coverage is consistently lower than their counterparts in previous generations at comparable points in their careers (see figure 1). Given the importance of saving for retirement from an early age, reversing the trend in slow millennial retirement saving would help ensure financial stability in the future. Additionally, given the many costs that millennials often face immediately upon entering the workforce—student loans, housing, family planning, etc.—introducing retirement savings as an important aspect of their financial success early on is essential in preventing procrastination of savings.

Thirdly, shifting the burden of logistics and costs to employers would significantly increase the profitability of these plans in the long-run and prevent workers from opting out of the system. Managers of investment funds often impose significant fees on their clients, both upfront and less visible, in order to profit. These fees often erode the savings of retirees by a significant

margin: an increase in total fees from one to two percent means that a retiree’s savings will run out ten years faster than it would have previously [7]. In recent years, many employers have shifted from defined benefit plans, such as pensions, to defined contribution plans, such as 401ks; in doing so, they have shifted the burden of fees and risk to the employees [8]. Although employers would now be burdened with the administrative costs of retirement plans, their collective bargaining power and ability to hire human resources professionals to navigate the litany of regulations and contracts would allow them to mitigate and minimize the costs more than an individual worker would [9].

Next Steps

If implemented, this policy would significantly improve the capacity of workers to save for retirement. This would drastically improve the financial standings of those in the future during their retirements and would give them and their families peace of mind. Furthermore, this policy also has the potential to save the government money in the long-run, as burdens on government programs become less severe and the capacity to reallocate money to those needing services most becomes more efficient.

However, it is important to recognize that this policy is not the sole solution to New York City’s or America’s retirement crisis. Although this policy would improve the rate at which workers save for retirement, there would still be barriers that workers face to financial stability in retirement, particularly lower-income workers.

It is important to recognize that for some workers, the mere option of saving is not sufficient. As a result, this policy should be seen as one part of a multi-faceted solution to ensuring solvency during retirement. Ideally, this policy would be combined with those that buttress government retirement programs for individuals most in need, such as expanding Medicare coverage, ensuring Social Security benefits keep up with inflation, etc.

Key Facts

- Almost 1/3 of the one million retirees in New York City live in poverty
- 58% of New Yorkers aged 55 do not have access to an employer-sponsored retirement plan
- The average American barely over one-tenth of the recommended level of retirement savings for financial stability

Talking Points

- Automatic enrollment has the power to motivate workers to save through the “power of suggestion”
- Mandating employer coverage of retirement plans would ensure that more millennials are given the option of saving from an early age
- Employers would be in a greater position to negotiate lower fees and administrative costs than individual employees would, ensuring greater profitability of retirement plans in the long-run.

Action Plan Snapshot

Given the potential for significant benefits for large subsets of the population, this policy has the potential to garner significant support. Firstly, it will be critical to mobilize support for this policy from young professionals and students, given the likelihood that they will be entering jobs where employers will not be providing retirement benefits (figure 1). Creating student organizations, or working with existing student advocacy organizations within universities in New York City, such as Columbia, Baruch, and the CUNY system, will create an enthusiastic, geographically dispersed group of supporters who will be able to exert pressure on legislators. Secondly, cooperating with senior citizen advocacy organizations such as the NYC AARP will greatly improve the odds of implementation, especially, as these organizations often have established political infrastructure. In particular, as older people tend to vote with more consistency than younger people, mobilizing these voters will be crucial for the policy’s implementation.

Within the New York City Council, the most important step will be ensuring that this is a priority for council members. Democrats control 47 out of 51 seats in the chamber, meaning that Republican/conservative opposition to a mandate for businesses will not be a significant barrier. The most important step will be ensuring that the policy gets a place on the docket of the Committee on Aging, which is currently chaired by Margaret Chin, a council member from lower Manhattan [12]. According to the New York City Comptroller’s office, lower Manhattan has one of the highest proportions of citizens

aged 65+ and 60-64, meaning that, if mobilized, pressure from Council Member Chin’s constituency would likely ensure a spot on the committee (see figures 2 and 3). Afterwards, targeting members of the committee whose districts overlap with areas with higher percentages of 60+ aged voters such as Paul Vallone, Mathieu Eugene, Mark Treyger, Chaim Deutsch will make passage easier. Upon passage in committee, pursuing a similar method of targeting legislatures with higher proportions of students and near retirement age workers would ensure passage within the City Council.

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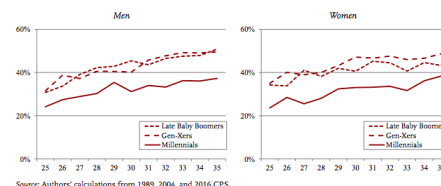


Figure 1
Source: Center for Retirement Research at Boston College [13]

Education Policy

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Modern Day Debtors' Prisons Must Come to an End

By Marie Ceske, mkc93@cornell.edu

Given that upwards of seventy-five percent of millennials do not have basic financial literacy knowledge and many students become responsible for their own finances at young ages, states should require that high schools offer stand-alone personal finance courses as part of their general curriculums. States should also provide teachers with adequate resources that tailor lessons toward "teachable moment" financial decisions students will face in their near futures. Non-mandatory, time intensive, and "just in time" financial education has been proven to have a positive, measurable, and statistically significant impact on improving financial literacy and money-managing habits.

Background

Financial literacy is often defined as knowledge of personal finances, money and investing, including topics such as "investing, insurance, real estate, paying for college, budgeting, retirement, and tax planning" [1]. While some could argue that students could acquire these skills in college or should learn from their parents at home, few colleges offer electives in personal finances and seventy percent of parents are reluctant to talk to their kids about money [3]. In fact, thirty-five percent of parents are actively uncomfortable talking with their kids, and some surveys suggest that parents are as uncomfortable talking about money with their kids as they are talking about sex [2]. As a result, young people don't understand many financial concepts such as debt, insurance, lending, credit scores or different loan repayment options. Considering that sex education has become an integral component of high school curriculums, it would make sense to extend education to include financial literacy considering its an equally uncomfortable and important topic.

Many students borrow for their college education, and of those who do not enter college, thirty percent enter the workforce immediately after high school. Thus, it is crucial that they understand how money works considering they are making significant decisions about their futures. Furthermore, money has become even more complicated, and millennials have accumulated more debt than any other generation - including amassing 1.4 trillion dollars in student debt. Around 45% of loan takers regret having taken the loan in the first place, and upwards of 70% of millennials are already stressed about retirement. Considering present financial challenges following the recession and rising costs of living, it is important for the financial health of future generations that students learn basic financial knowledge.

As evidenced by a study that represents 85% of high school in the U.S., only 16.5% of students are required to take a personal finance course in order to graduate. Outside of the five states that require these classes, only 8.6% of all students and 5.5% of low income schools had personal finance requirements

[1]. While 21 states are required to offer these courses as non-mandatory, only 5 require these classes to be a standalone. Furthermore, only 25 states have financial literacy resources for training teachers [7]. As a result, students and millennials know surprisingly little about financial matters. A 2015 study indicated that only 24% of individuals aged 18 to 34 could answer four out of five questions correctly on a basic financial literacy test.

Policy Idea

States should require that high schools offer stand-alone personal finance courses and provide teachers with resources and training. This course should include teaching students about basic concepts such as how to save, invest and spend, and other more complex topics such as loans, credit scores and interest rates. Through applying experiential examples and teaching "just in time" skills such as how to finance a college education or purchase a car, students are able to gain direct access to understanding how financial matters work and can use this knowledge to build greater

savvy as they become increasingly responsible for their own finances. Additionally, states should ensure that teachers are adequately prepared to teach these courses, providing adequate resources and training material that match state standards.

Policy Analysis

In a meta-analysis of 126 studies, researchers found that financial education has a measurable, statistically significant impact on financial literacy and behaviors. The study aimed to assess four key areas: if increasing financial literacy has a positive impact on behavior, if the effects of education change based on different target groups (wealth, age, education level), what specific types of behavior education changed (borrowing, saving, budgeting), and if education changed based on its intensity and a “teachable moment” factor. It found that learning in a classroom setting had a positive impact on financial literacy and financial behavior. These lessons are often most effective as wealth increases, but age has a negative impact on changing behaviors. While it may be hard to overcome the challenges of effective education in low-income areas, targeting individuals at high-school age is important in influencing their future behaviors. While education level lead to increasingly marginal returns, benefits of this education were unilaterally positive. The study found that education is far more effective on impacting retirement saving and budgeting than borrowing behavior. Overall, debt-related financial issues may be most challenging to target through financial education. Overall, teachable moment factor was the

most crucial factor, increasing effectiveness by 0.079 standard deviations - roughly 48% larger than the average effect of other variables. The study also concluded that constant and intense courses on a weekly basis were most effective. However, mandating these courses be taken has a negative correlation on behavior. While much of the push back that mandatory financial literacy education has little measurable impact and could actually prove counterproductive, this criticism largely stems from the “mandatory” variable of those proposals. Thus, this proposal instead advocates that these courses be required to be offered, but non-mandatory. Allowing students to elect this option has been proven effective since students who are more motivated to learn and internalize the material will be more likely to reap the benefits of these lessons.

Conclusively, non-mandatory, time-intensive courses that teach “teachable moment” lessons have a statistically significant, measurable impact on students financial literacy and decisions. Given these statistics, it is clear that personal finance could have a positive impact on many students in order for them to better understand their financial needs and plan for their futures. Considering very few students demonstrate basic knowledge and few schools have included this education as part of their curriculum, there could be a direct benefit and motivation for adding such a course into the general canon of high school classes. Teaching students foundational understandings of money can help ensure that students make prudent decisions and

therefore prevent lifelong struggles with their finances [7].

Next Steps

The best next steps would be to ensure that these courses are included in all states, but this would likely have to be targeted on a state by state basis, as education standards are currently controlled by each state. However, there could be some kind of federal mandate that required that each state include this curriculum in order to receive full funding. It would likely be best to target individual state senators and begin to develop a national curriculum standard. It would also be important to determine what exactly would make a financial literacy class effective and differ from those which have been proven less useful. Furthermore, Brookings recently came out with a study that assessed financial literacy policies by each state. This analysis could be first target states with only “partial” standards and later address those without any requirements. Thus, further research should be done on what lessons have a causal impact on ensuring that students make prudent financial decisions, using this insight to tailor curriculum.

Key Facts

- 75% of millennials do not have basic financial literacy
- Only 5 states currently require personal finance education
- 35% of parents are uncomfortable talking with their kids about finances
- A meta-analysis of 126 studies proved financial education has a statistically significant and measurable impact on financial literacy and behaviors.

Talking Points

- A meta-analysis of 126 studies shows a positive correlation between personal finances classes and financial literacy and behavior.
- Most important variables in increasing statistical significance are “teachable moment,” non-mandatory, constant, and intensity/week
- In accordance with much published criticism against financial education, mandatory courses have a negative impact on students’ financial behaviors. Thus, states should be required to offer these courses, but students must elect to take them.
- Proper education and training of teachers is important, and school or state-wide intervention into these courses’ materials is important in ensuring effectiveness.

Action Plan Snapshot

First, a national educational lobbying organization such as the National Education Association, American Federation of Teachers, and The Center for Education Reform should be contacted. These groups can then use their resources to create a national lobby plan, thereby allowing states to learn about the importance of financial education. Given that relying on the ripple effect for state adoption is quite slow, creating a national

lobbying campaign to build awareness of the issue could help expedite adoption. However, given that individual states set curriculum standards, it would be necessary to target states at the individual level. This could be done by contacting state representatives, starting first with states whose education procedures or general governing policies are most similar to the five states who have currently adopted financial literacy courses. Since research shows the importance of tailored education by knowledgeable instructors, the Department of Education’s MCREL Directory of National Subject Benchmark Standards and the NCEO Directory of States Secondary Graduation Requirements should be contacted to work toward developing clear lesson plans and guidelines. It has also been shown that educators are most effective when taught about financial literacy at a college-level, and thus these teachers should receive training from professors or skilled financial advisors before taking on these courses in their own classrooms. Once a curriculum has been developed, training programs for these teachers should be established on a district-by-district basis.

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Revitalizing Grant Programs to TEACH New Teachers

By Ashni Verma, amv84@cornell.edu

The TEACH Grant Program as it currently stands causes thousands of teachers in low-income schools to face unexpected debts. To reform this program while still providing an avenue for students to begin careers in education, the administration of the grants should be supervised solely by the Department of Education.

Background

The large teacher shortage in the United States continues to grow as the cost of training and education rises, and as the salaries and benefits of educators decrease [1]. Studies show that one effective way to reduce the cost of entry into the industry would be to provide students with service scholarships that allow them to study education [1]. The Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Program is a federal program that provides students with grants to pay for school in exchange for four years of service teaching in a high need area and field [2]. The program has facilitated recruitment into teaching positions, indicated by the fact that 58% of grant recipients cite the program as a key factor in their decision to teach [3]. However, should a recipient fail to complete the service requirement, the grant would turn into a direct unsubsidized loan with accrued interest from the date it was granted [2]. 63% of recipients see their grants turned to loans [3]. This, however, is an inaccurate representation of the number who truly *do* complete their grant requirements. Because of the administration of this grant through contracted loan

servicers, independent companies that manage loan interest and payment, many people fall into debt because of an overcomplicated process or minor clerical errors [4].

Policy Idea

Grants given by the TEACH Program should be administered solely through the Department of Education, and not through contracted loan servicers such as FedLoan. This suggested policy aims to streamline the administration of the program in order to help educators maintain their grant status. This would continue to subsidize the cost of entering a low-paying field, as the program originally set out to do, but it would also limit the impact of independent company interests on the matriculation of students.

Policy Analysis

Many of the issues with current TEACH Grant administration stems from the outsourcing of this work to FedLoan, a loan servicing company. The company has an exclusive contract with the Department of Education and thus oversees the accounts of all grant recipients [5]. This, however, has complicated the certification process for recipients

hoping to prove that they adhere to program rules. Between August 2013 and September 2014, for example, 2,252 recipients had their grants erroneously converted [6]; FedLoan was responsible for these unwarranted conversions, as they failed to give recipients enough time to certify and provided faulty information that often contested that which was given by the Department of Education [6].

Not only has the company's oversight caused thousands of grant-recipients to fall into debt, but it has largely failed to properly respond to appeals. Representatives often refuse to communicate with recipients or discourage them from responding to appeals [7]. While the servicer has taken steps to remedy these issues there has not been an improvement in the administration of this program [6]. Likewise, former attempts on part of the Department of Education to streamline the administration by giving FedLoan the ability to convert erroneous loans back to grants has not shown significant improvement in the program [6]. "Education and the servicer provide incomplete and inconsistent information to recipients about the availability of and criterion for disputing a grant-to-loan conversion" [6]. Too much is

getting lost in the interactions between individual recipients, the intermediary company, and the government agency.

Additionally, a major issue with the outsourcing of these functions is that FedLoan, an independent corporation, does not have the same level of accountability as the Department of Education. Any loan revenues the servicer receive “may be utilized... for the corporate purposes of the agency” [5] and are not held accountable by the government. This suggests that FedLoan has an incentive to overlook erroneous conversions, and is further corroborated by the fact that the business’ revenue from these loans increases every year [5]. Not only is the administration of the TEACH Grant Program inefficient, but it unfairly benefits the intermediary corporation.

In order to solve this issue, it is imperative to streamline TEACH Grant administration solely through the Department of Education. This would (a) reduce confusion for recipients looking to appeal unwarranted conversions and (b) increase accountability for the program at large. Firstly, the appeals process would be streamlined without an unnecessary intermediary. Instead of exhausting all possible options with FedLoan and then turning to the Federal Student Aid Ombudsman Group [8], grant recipients would have a clear path to appealing their decisions. And, as a result of this, the Department of Education will have a better understanding of the workings of its program. This would eliminate the issues created by inconsistencies in administration information [6], and would allow the department to spread accurate,

holistic information about the grant program, appeal processes, and would generally be more accountable for its program.

Next Steps

There is not enough information on how this policy idea would affect the budget of the Department of Education to fully implement it immediately. While there is information on the amount of money that is given out in grants in loans each year in the TEACH Grant Federal Budget Proposal [9,10], the information on the costs of loan servicing is not as readily available. To implement these reforms, analysts would need to research the amount of money the government currently pays FedLoan to perform these services for the government. Analysts would need to compare the amount that is currently spent on servicing and compare that to the estimated costs for the government to take on this role. With an understanding of the potential costs and benefits, the Department of Education could adjust spending within the TEACH budget to accommodate this change and therefore streamline the administration of this program.

Key Facts

- Costs of preparation and entry into the teaching field are a major factor of the widening teacher shortage in the United States; students are incentivized to study more lucrative subjects in school and to accept higher paying positions because of their high student debts [1].
- Scholarship and grant programs such as the TEACH Grant Program incentivize students to

pursue teaching careers by offsetting the costs of their own education. 58% of recipients cite the TEACH Grant as the reason they entered the career [3].

- 63% of recipients see their grants turned to loans because of a supposed failure to comply with program requirements [3]; the majority of these recipients cited process-related factors, such as misinformation over certification, as the reason they defaulted on loans [3].
- FedLoan, an independent company contracted by the Department of Education to service TEACH Grants and loans, consistently provides incorrect information to grant recipients and are reported to profit off of erroneously defaulted loans [5].

Talking Points

- By requiring the Department of Education to directly administer TEACH Grants, we would eliminate the confusion created through communication with an intermediary company.
- This would increase government transparency and accountability, as Education would have direct oversight on the report.
- Streamlining this process would burden fewer people with unwarranted loans when they *have* completed their required service.

Action Plan Snapshot

A top-down view of this policy indicates that the Department

of Education must make significant changes to the structure of the TEACH Grant Program. Implementing this policy requires additional research and coordination between the U.S. government, FedLoan, and current grant recipients.

Firstly, the Department of Education should reach out to policy research institutes that have already done some work in the field, such as the Learning Policy Institute [11]. By partnering with such organizations, Education can provide the necessary information on its finances and work with analysts who are already well-versed in the issues. Together, this coalition should research the potential benefits and costs of this policy change and determine whether it is economically viable.

Should the policy be considered feasible, Education would need to rebuild its relationships with involved parties. This policy requires that the department terminate its relationship with FedLoan; this may require negotiations between the two party, as they are currently linked through a contract. Furthermore, the process of transferring individual accounts from FedLoan servers to

Education's would likely take time and require effort on both sides to ensure that grant recipients' information doesn't get lost in the process.

Education will also need to redefine its relationship with TEACH grant recipients. As the sole overseers of their accounts, Education will need to develop more infrastructure to manage the accounts of and communicate efficiently with individuals.

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The Case for Universal Pre-Kindergarten

By Aren Moss, am2696@cornell.edu

A handful of state and local governments have implemented universal pre-kindergarten programs, therefore providing the opportunity for every student to have an extra year of schooling during a critical age for development. Studies show the overwhelming positive effect of pre-kindergarten on students' academic abilities, and that these benefits are retained as they age. Incentives from the federal government in the form of categorical grants to states that implement their own universal pre-kindergarten programs could help improve American education and further empower a new generation of problem-solvers.

Background

The success of American education clearly lags behind other developed countries. Every three years the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) administers an examination to 15 year olds in 72 countries, testing their abilities in math, science, and reading. This test is called the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). In 2014, American students ranked 41st in math, well below the average for OECD countries [7]. American students managed to score above the OECD average in reading and science, but still were nowhere near the top percentile, as they were ranked 24th and 25th respectively [7]. America lies in the middle of the pack in terms of education spending as well. It is clear that the U.S. education system has plenty of room for improvement.

In 2015, New York City mayor Bill de Blasio implemented a universal pre-kindergarten program which provided a free public pre-kindergarten education to four year olds (and three year olds as of recent) all over the city. While evaluation of this program has been short-term, it has already shown promising signs of increasing the academic abilities of New Yorkers.

Similarly, statewide programs aimed at providing free education before kindergarten in Oklahoma and Georgia have also been proven to be highly effective.

A bill, H.R. 5096– The Universal Prekindergarten and Early Childhood Education Act of 2018, that would create a competitive grant program for the states to establish their own pre-kindergarten initiatives was introduced to Congress by Representative Eleanor Holmes Norton of the District of Columbia early in 2018. It has most recently been referred to the House Committee on Education and the Workforce.

Policy Idea

Following the example of New York City, Oklahoma, and Georgia, the United States government should incentivize local governments via categorical grants to create their own universal pre-kindergarten programs. It would be extremely difficult to nationalize pre-kindergarten education, but the federal government could see similar results by distributing funding to states and cities that have well-informed proposals to implement their unique universal pre-kindergarten systems. Planning and executing such a massive program would require assistance

from officials involved in organizing similar policies in the states that have them.

Policy Analysis

It is evident that American education needs to be improved. Current ideas such as voucher programs direct efforts towards public secondary schools, which run on massive, state-dependent scales and ever changing national standards, not to mention teacher unions and tenure. Instead, it would be much easier to focus on creating more educational opportunities instead of changing the existing quality. In the 1960s, the Perry Preschool Study divided 123 students born into poverty into a group that attended a high-quality preschool and a control group that did not. When these participants were interviewed at the age of 40, it was found that those who attended preschool exhibited higher salaries, job retention rates, and high school graduation rates than the control. The preschool group also committed less crime [1]. Creating a universal pre-kindergarten education system in order to achieve the aforementioned long-term benefits seems daunting, but the existing programs have proven it to be worthwhile. Only one year after its implementation of

Pre-K for All, New York City more than tripled preschool enrollment among four year olds [2]. Although evaluation of the Pre-K for All program is limited by its recent implementation, citywide studies show that the initiative improved learning while maintaining the quality of the schools. Children enrolled in the program saw statistically significant gains across all academic skills including math, writing, and letter recognition [2]. Simultaneously, educational quality did not falter as teachers had five years of experience in a preschool classroom on average, as well as nearly 13 years in any educational setting [2]. New York City also proves that efficient rollout of such a program can be achieved. The same study stated, “key stakeholders report that the engagement of a large number of key players and City agencies, increases in City agency capacity and infrastructure, and collaboration within and between City agencies, demonstrated a high-level of commitment to reach the initiative’s goals and were major successes” [2]. Similar studies evaluated New Mexico’s Pre-K initiative and showed positive impacts on the children’s learning [3]. The Department of Education under the Trump administration has listed one of their priorities as “empowering State and local decision makers to continue to refine their own systems for school improvement” [6], so receiving federal support is possible. However, the current trend is moving away from further spending. Between 2017 and 2018, grants to local educational agencies decreased by a total of 3.7%, and every single state saw a decrease in this funding [4]. Currently around 67% of DOE spending goes to aid

to the states, and 29% goes to aid to individuals and businesses [5]. By reducing the percentage of spending directed at individuals and businesses such as those that create standardized tests, the federal government could find the capital to provide states with categorical grant incentives to establish their own universal Pre-K programs and improve the educational outcomes of their students.

Next Steps

In order to achieve the direct long term benefits of pre-kindergarten education, it is recommended that the United States Department of Education adapts its budget to set aside funding for categorical grants. A more extensive cost-benefit analysis for research purposes should be conducted by the government. Specifically, the Department of Education should expand their proportion of aid to the states by decreasing their proportion of aid to individuals and businesses, therefore providing the states with the resources needed to run their own universal Pre-K programs. It is also recommended that administrators, planners, and others involved with the successful implementation of universal Pre-K programs in New York City, Oklahoma, and Georgia meet to form an independent committee aimed at working with state governments to create a smooth transition to universal Pre-K.

Key Facts

- In 2015, American students ranked 41st in math PISA scores, below the OECD average [7].
- In 2015, American students ranked 24th in reading and

25th in science, slightly about the OECD average [7].

- New York City’s Pre-K For All initiative tripled enrollment in preschool after one year [2].

Talking Points

- Expanding universal schooling outside of primary education into preschool and colleges is an idea with growing popularity.
- There already exist three successful implementations of a local universal pre-kindergarten system.
- Federal funding in the form of categorical grants could incentivize state governments to design and create their own universal pre-kindergarten programs.

Action Plan Snapshot

Many people were skeptical when New York City mayor Bill de Blasio first unveiled his Pre-K for All initiative, so it must be expected that similar announcements in other states will face equal, if not more severe, criticism. Generating support from parents for such a massive overhaul would require a PR campaign including promotional videos featuring pre-kindergarten teachers, principals, and students. Eleanor Holmes Norton, the representative who introduced The Universal Prekindergarten and Early Childhood Education Act of 2018 (H.R. 5096) would likely volunteer to be a spokesperson for the bill. Co-sponsors Gwen Moore (D-WI), Andre Carson (D-IN), Mark DeSaulnier (D-CA), Jerry McNerney (D-CA), and Vicente Gonzalez (D-TX) would also likely spearhead garnering support in the

House of Representatives. Advocacy groups such as the Network For Public Education (NPE), National Education Association (NEA), and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) would need to lobby influential congressmen in order to pass H.R. 5096 or any similar legislation.

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Environment and Tech Policy

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Keelin is a junior in The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, majoring in Environmental and Sustainability Sciences and Development Sociology with a minors in Inequality Studies and Climate Change. Besides the Roosevelt Institute, she is an Andrew Goodman Ambassador, a member of Epsilon Eta, the Polson Institute Undergraduate Fellow, plays french horn in the Cornell University Wind Symphony, and does research on intergovernmental climate change policy. Keelin plans to continue on to graduate school after finishing her undergraduate degree at Cornell in 2020. Her policy interests include environmental law, customary law, and international land law. This summer Keelin will be conducting agroecology research with Soils, Food, and Healthy Communities, an NGO based in Ekwendeni, Malawi.

Rewilding mountain lions to control deer overpopulation

By Matt D'Ambrosio, mjd393@cornell.edu

The removal of mountain lions from Upstate New York has thrown the ecosystem severely out of balance. Among other risks, depredation has led to massive deer overabundance which causes motor vehicle accidents and damages the economy. Rewilding mountain lions into Adirondack State Park will control deer populations which in turn will improve the ecological health of Upstate New York, improve public safety, and save citizens money.

Background

Mountain lions were extirpated from New York State in the late 1800s.^[39] The removal of these apex predators has enabled deer populations to swell to an economically and environmentally hazardous level.^[40] Even with virtually unlimited hunting, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation recognizes that desired harvest levels for sustainability are not being achieved.^[41]

One of the biggest causes for concern are motor vehicle collisions with deer of which the state sees 70,000 each year.^[42] The property damage to citizens is estimated to be over \$4,000 per collision.^[43] Furthermore, deer cause \$59 million in damage to New York crops per annum, and they are having ruinous effects on the

state ecology.^[44] Their over-browsing is destroying forests which decimates financially important industries such as birdwatching and ginseng harvesting.^[45] Worse still, deer have been shown to enable invasive species proliferation—something that already costs the state millions each year.^[46]

Policy Idea

The New York Department of Environmental Conservation should oversee the release of a group of breeding-capable mountain

lions into Adirondack State Park with the intention of establishing a permanent population. The aim would be for the mountain lions to aid in decreasing the number of deer inhabiting upstate New York.

Policy Analysis

Releasing mountain lions into Adirondack State Park would reduce deer populations and abate the damages deer inflict on humans. It is estimated that the big cats would consume roughly 10% of the adult deer population.^[47] This reduction is projected to reduce deer-vehicle collisions by 22% and could save New York \$24 million and 18 human fatalities within 30 years.^[48] There is precedent of success because South Dakota has attributed a \$1.1 million savings per year to its decision to

³⁹ "Eastern Cougar," New York Department of Environmental Conservation, n.d.

⁴⁰ "Deer Overabundance," New York Department of Environmental Conservation, n.d.

⁴¹ "Deer Overabundance."

⁴² "Deer Overabundance."

⁴³ "Deer Overabundance."

⁴⁴ T.L. Brown, D.J. Decker, and Paul Curtis, "Farmers' Estimates of Economic Damage from White-Tailed Deer in New York State," *HDRU* 4, no. 3 (2004).

⁴⁵ T. Nuttle, T.E. Ristau, and AA Royo, "Long-Term Biological Legacies of Herbivore Density in a Landscape-Scale Experiment: Forest Understoreys Reflect Past Deer Density Treatments for at Least 20 Years," *Journal of Ecology* 102 (2014): 221–28.

⁴⁶ T.M. Knight et al., "Deer Facilitate Invasive Plant Success in a Pennsylvania Forest Understorey," *Natura Areas Journal* 29, no. 2 (2009): 110–16.

⁴⁷ John W. Laundré, "The Feasibility of the North-Eastern USA Supporting the Return of the Cougar Puma Concolor," *Oryx* Volume 47, no. 1 (January 2013): 96–104, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0030605311001475>.

⁴⁸ John W. Laundré.

reestablish its own population of mountain lions.^[49]

Environmentally, the reintroduction of apex predators elsewhere in North America has proven to cull ungulate populations resulting in a healthier ecosystem. Most famously, the reintroduction of wolves to Yellowstone National Park saw Aspen trees and other browse increase, which directly and indirectly enabled otters, muskrat, and bison numbers to increase.^[50] This is known as trophic cascade, and it could lead to mountain lions increasing New York's fauna such as moose and lynx which provide ecosystem services and attract tourists.

Some may believe bringing back mountain lions would be futile because locals would detest them and poach them in resistance. But unlike wolves, shy mountain lions are not disliked by those who live around them. In fact, 68% of Coloradoans have a positive view of their cougars, and 79% would like to see their population increase.^[51] Adirondack State Park could potentially support 150-350 cougars, and it has similar human and road densities to Southern Florida and the Black Hills of South Dakota where

humans and cougars coexist peacefully.^[52]

The concept of rewilding is an example of passive conservation management that could potentially lead to a decrease in necessary spending on conservation as ecosystems revert to their natural state.^[53] This is important because there is a growing crisis across the United States in that conservation funding is falling precipitously. A massive amount of funding for management comes from hunting, trapping, and fishing licenses, and younger outdoorsmen are not replacing the older generation as they age out of these activities. Decreased hunting, and hunting revenue, leads to poorer management of wild spaces, and nearly the entire ~\$50 million per year budget of the New York Conservation Fund comes from hunting, trapping, and fishing.^{[54][55]} This increasing uncertainty in conservation funding is a prime example of the imperativeness

in trying passive management techniques such as rewilding.

Next Steps

I would recommend this policy be implemented by New York State. The Bureau of Wildlife, under the supervision of the Division of Fish and Wildlife within the Department of Environmental Conservation, should establish a Habitat Management Plan within Adirondack State Park in preparation for the mountain lions.^[56]

The Bureau of Wildlife should also contact the Fish and Wildlife management agencies of all 16 states that currently have viable, breeding cougar populations.^[57] Whichever state's agency is willing to be the most cooperative in capturing wild lions and transporting them for release in the Adirondacks is the one that should be selected as a partner.

Unfortunately, the Eastern Cougar subspecies of mountain lions was protected under the Endangered Species Act until January of 2018 when it was delisted due to it finally being declared extinct.^[58] Biologists should take the

⁵² John W. Laundré, "The Feasibility of the North-Eastern USA Supporting the Return of the Cougar Puma Concolor."

⁵³ William J. Ripple and Robert L. Beschta, "Trophic Cascades in Yellowstone: The First 15 Years after Wolf Reintroduction."

⁵⁴ Mark P. Vrtiska et al., "Economic and Conservation Ramifications from the Decline of Waterfowl Hunters," *Wildlife Society Bulletin* 37, no. 2 (June 1, 2013): 380–88, <https://doi.org/10.1002/wsb.245>.

⁵⁵ Thomas P. DiNapoli, "Environmental Funding in New York State" (Office of Budget and Policy Analysis, December 2014).

⁴⁹ John W. Laundré.

⁵⁰ William J. Ripple and Robert L. Beschta, "Trophic Cascades in Yellowstone: The First 15 Years after Wolf Reintroduction," *Biological Conservation* 145 (2012): 205–13.

⁵¹ Corona Research, "Public Opinions and Perceptions of Mountain Lion Issues" (Colorado Division of Wildlife, April 2006).

⁵⁶ "Wildlife Management Areas - NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation," accessed October 18, 2018, <https://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7768.html>.

⁵⁷ "State by State," The Cougar Fund, accessed October 18, 2018, <https://www.cougarfund.org/cougars/state-by-state/>.

⁵⁸ Meagan Racey and Phil Kloer, "Long Extinct Eastern Cougar to Be Removed from Endangered Species List Correcting Lingering Anomaly" (Fish and Wildlife Service, January 22, 2018).

necessary steps to get the Eastern Cougar back under the protection of the Endangered Species Act once the individuals have been released.

Key Facts

- The extirpation of mountain lions has enabled deer populations to swell to an economically and environmentally hazardous level.^[59]
- There are 70,000 deer-motor vehicle collisions each year.^[60]
- Over-browsing is destroying forests and harming outdoor recreation industries.^[61]
- The DEC recognizes that even unlimited hunting will not cull the deer population to sustainable levels.^[62]

Talking Points

- Mountain lions would consume 10% of the adult deer population.^[63]
- This could reduce deer-vehicle collisions by 22% and could save New York \$24 million and 18 human fatalities within 30 years.^[64]

- 68% of Coloradoans have a positive view of their cougars, and 79% would like to see their population increase.^[65]

Action Plan Snapshot

This is a policy that can be carried out by the New York DEC as part of its mandate to manage wildlife populations for the betterment of New York residents. As such, the office of Basil Seggos—the commissioner of the 3,000-person agency—should be lobbied in favor of this policy. Wildlife organizations with a history of lobbying such as Defenders of Wildlife should be partnered with in this endeavor.

In attempting to build a citizen coalition to fight for the rewilding of mountain lions, we should start with the residents of the Adirondacks themselves. When asked, 70% of residents said they would not object to mountain lions recolonizing New York State on their own.^[66] This indicates that there may be tacit approval of the policy, but motivating active support would take a campaign informing people of the benefits. A door-to-door campaign educating people on the benefits of mountain

lions—particularly in preventing vehicle collisions—would be beneficial. One aspect of the campaign should include asking people to contact their state legislators to advocate for the policy. D. Billy Jones, a Democratic Assemblyman representing the 115th District in the Adirondacks, should be reached out to by a team of pro-mountain lion constituents as a potential key ally in the process.

⁵⁹ “Deer Overabundance.”

⁶⁰ “Deer Overabundance.”

⁶¹ T. Nuttle, T.E. Ristau, and AA Royo, “Long-Term Biological Legacies of Herbivore Density in a Landscape-Scale Experiment: Forest Understoreys Reflect Past Deer Density Treatments for at Least 20 Years.”

⁶² “Deer Overabundance.”

⁶³ John W. Laundré, “The Feasibility of the North-Eastern USA Supporting the Return of the Cougar Puma Concolor.”

⁶⁴ John W. Laundré.

⁶⁵ Corona Research, “Public Opinions and Perceptions of Mountain Lion Issues.”

⁶⁶ Elizabeth B. McGovern and Heidi E. Kretser, “Puma Concolor Cougar in the Adirondack Park: Resident and Visitor Perspectives” (Wildlife Conservation Society, August 2014).

Including a Sustainability Requirement as Part of Cornell University's College of Arts and Sciences' Curriculum

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The multitude of environmental issues afflicting the planet today can be alleviated via sustainable decision making. Since college graduates often pursue careers and positions that give them the agency and power to make choices or take the initiative to positively influence the environment, it is imperative that they have the tools to engage in environmentally-conscious decision making. Cornell University, an institution dedicated to improving the livelihoods of its students and others around the world [1], should require its College of Arts and Sciences to include a course on environmental sustainability as a distribution requirement. This initiative will push Cornell graduates to think critically about environmental issues and emerge as leaders in the field of sustainability.

Background

As a result of unprecedented economic growth combined with reliance on energy intensive technologies and increased consumer demand for goods and services, environmental degradation has emerged as a critical, urgent issue threatening the planet and its inhabitants. A reason for the continued occurrence of environmentally unsustainable activities and attitudes is the lack of public education and awareness on the topic. Environmental education is a tool that facilitates understanding of the environment while providing the skills and incentives necessary to participate in effecting positive change [2]. However, the majority of undergraduate universities do not assume responsibility for educating their students on neither environmental challenges nor actionable approaches to mitigate these issues. As a result, college students are not equipped

with the information to realize the severity and multifaceted nature of environmental problems; therefore, they are not motivated to adjust their behavioral patterns. Since those who receive college degrees are more likely to hold higher status-positions, have autonomy over their work, and receive promotions, they are positioned to have greater decision-making power [3]. Hence it is crucial that college students be well-informed about environmental matters, so they can apply sustainable thinking to decisions made in their future career.

Policy Idea

Cornell University's College of Arts and Sciences should require a course of three or more credits on environmental sustainability and title the requirement, "Environmental Analysis (EA- AS)". The requirement can be met by taking any environmental-based course

in either the Natural Resources or Developmental Sociology departments or by taking any course from the "List C. Environmental Social Sciences and Humanities" offerings as detailed in the Environmental and Sustainability Sciences major curriculum [4]. The course will be counted as a distribution requirement in the "social sciences, humanities, and arts categories" in addition to the existing requirement of completing at least four, three credit courses in these categories [5].

Policy Analysis

The proposed policy is actionable as it does not require additional resources but expands on existing systems. As of the fall of 2016 there were 4,233 students enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences [6]. In the 2018 calendar year, a total of 13 introductory environmentally focused courses were offered in

the Natural Resources or Development Sociology departments [7]. Additionally, the “List C. Environmental Social Sciences and Humanities” curriculum includes an additional 53 courses that would fulfill the proposed sustainability requirement. As a result, there are a total of 66 available courses every year. With the generalization that undergraduate enrollment in sustainability courses are evenly distributed throughout the four years of college, one quarter of the total student body, or 1058 students, will take an environmental class every year. This policy assumes that approximately 1000 extra undergraduates will enroll in a sustainability course every year, which is an overestimate as some of these students would take environmental courses regardless of the requirement. Considering that 1058 undergraduates seek to complete the requirement and 66 courses are offered per year, 16 additional students will be added to each course.

A possible concern is that increased class sizes will raise the student to professor ratio, thus taking away from a personalized, interactive learning environment. However, most of these courses are introductory courses held in lecture halls where student interaction is mainly with teaching assistants. A solution would be to hire more teaching assistants, which would provide more opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students looking for teaching experience or academic credit. Involving Environmental and Sustainability Sciences students as TAs would also increase

interactions between students in this major and those in the College of Arts and Sciences, therefore provide opportunities for environmentally-minded students to influence the Cornell community.

Potential opponents include professors who would view this change as an unnecessary complexity and departure from their established teaching styles. Also, the Administration may object to this proposal on the basis that the student to professor ratio would rise, therefore making the university less attractive during the admissions process. The student body may either be opponents or allies in this case. Students majoring in environment-related fields may protest increased class sizes or may view this initiative as a productive way to spread environmental education.

Allies wishing to push forward this proposal should leverage Dickson College as an example of a university known for graduating future leaders in sustainability. They have strived to provide students with the skills and abilities to tackle environmental challenges, starting in the fall of 2015 the class of 2019 and onwards was required to take a sustainability course as part of the general requirement [8]. Students can opt to take a course coded “Sustainability Investigations” which examines sustainability in and of itself or a course coded “Sustainability Connections” which explores the tangible application of sustainability to real world issues [9]. The college’s policy has instilled in their graduates the propensity and ability to achieve sustainable

objectives. Dickson’s initiative reveals that the idea of a sustainability requirement has entered the dialogue among higher education and is a feasible strategy that other institutions will explore.

Next Steps

Implementing this policy first requires identifying potential opponents to build a supportive coalition. Surveying students in environment-related fields will produce a clearer idea of their attitude and motivation to support the policy. Reaching out to student clubs and groups will prove effective as a collective body has more power to influence decisions than individual students and because the structured nature of an organization can pursue change in a more productive manner.

After reaching out to allies it’s important to determine strategies to overcome barriers posed by opponents. Alumni who are environmentally-conscious and fiscally powerful in their donations made to the University are most likely to exert their influence to persuade the professors and the Administration to support the policy. Also, student organizations should stimulate dialogue on-campus that pressures opponents to support this initiative at the risk of gaining the reputation of hindering environmental sustainability.

Key Facts

- Earth’s average temperature is predicted to rise between 1.8 and 4.0 degrees Celsius while sea levels are expected to

rise between 20 and 50 centimeters by 2100 [10].

- Researchers have determined 2031 as the point of no return after which the planet will not be able to recover from the afflicted environmental degradation [11].
- Environmental education has been associated with a 90% rise in skills associated with promoting sustainability and 83% increase in behaviors that enhanced environmental health [12].

Talking Points

- College students are well positioned to leverage their education and careers to make influential, sustainable decisions.
- Including a sustainability requirement in the College of Arts and Sciences' curriculum would promote environmental awareness without being financially burdensome.
- The support of interested undergraduates, student organizations, and alumni will pressure opponents to implement this policy.

Action Plan Snapshot

Months 1 and 2: The first step is to identify stakeholders that will support the proposal by reaching out to individual students, undergraduate organizations, and alumni. Surveys will gauge whether individual students are interested in this policy. Segmenting the student body by major, year, career plans, etc. will determine trends in student

attitude towards the proposed change, and as such segments that support the policy should be specifically targeted to join the initiative. Additionally, it is important to connect with undergraduate organizations related to sustainability via email or in-person to assess interest in the policy. Since there are a limited number of on-campus organizations it is feasible to contact each individually. These student organizations should then gain support from prominent individual alumni or alumni networks to identify allies outside the student body.

Months 3 and 4: This timeframe should be dedicated to convincing opponents to recognize the advantages of implementing a sustainability course requirement. This approach should be multifaceted and extend beyond a singular dialogue with the Administration and professors. Proponents of change should present factual, research-based data that describes how growing environmental education will protect environmental health while promoting Cornell, the department, and the professor as advocates for a sustainable future. Allies should also use media, tabling, and on-campus workshops to disseminate information about the long-term environmental benefits of the initiative to spread awareness and build support for the policy. Months 5 and 6: After policy implementation, the next step is to hire additional teaching assistants so that the influx of students does not decrease the quality of education. The various academic departments impacted by the policy must pursue

methods to hire new talent, which could entail proactive outreach to students interested in assisting the class. Academic departments should work with professors to adjust their curriculum as necessary to accommodate increased class sizes. Lastly, if the Administration and impacted departments are interested in expanding the selection of environmental classes, they must conduct a budget analysis to determine whether it is possible to increase spending on professors' salaries.

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Phasing out Federal Fossil Fuel Subsidies: A Five-Year Transition to Renewable Subsidies

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I propose phasing out federal fossil fuel subsidies through a cumulative annual reduction of 20% a year of total subsidies over a five-year period, starting in 2020, and ending in 2025. The amount reduced each year from federal fossil fuel subsidies will be diverted to federal renewable energy subsidies, resulting in a 100 percent divestment from fossil fuel subsidies to renewable energy subsidies by 2025. This will effectively eliminate federal fossil fuel subsidies, and will simultaneously support cleaner, more sustainable energy alternatives for the future.

Background

In 1895, Svante Arrhenius was the first scientist to study and predict carbon dioxide's effect on the atmospheric temperature [1]. Since then, the climate has gotten progressively warmer, as various industrial revolutions and other anthropogenic acts have damaged the earth's ecosystems. An increase in greenhouse gases, particularly carbon dioxide, poses a threat to humans and ecosystem alike, including but not limited to coastal erosion and flooding, unpredictable and violent storms, higher death rates, higher extinction rates, and the disappearance of the arctic ice sheet [2]. The United States has historically been the world's largest carbon dioxide emitter, and currently ranks second in the world following China [3]. While states are coming together to honor the agreements within the Paris Climate Accords, the United States has pulled out of the agreement. Furthermore, the United States is continuing to deregulate the energy industry in favor of fossil fuel production.

The United States Federal Government gives an estimated 10 to 50 billion dollars in federal subsidies to the fossil fuel industry every year [4]. There have been numerous attempts to end fossil fuel subsidies, such as "The Repeal Big Oil Tax Subsidies Act" proposed in the Senate, and more recently, the "End Polluter Welfare Act" also proposed in the Senate [4]. Both acts failed to pass [5].

Policy Idea

The US federal government should effectively eliminate fossil fuel subsidies over a five-year period, while gradually transitioning the funds allocated to subsidies to funding for renewable energy grants for research and development. Starting in 2020, annual fossil fuel subsidies will be cut at a compound rate of 20% a year (in 2020 they will be cut 20%, in 2021 they will be cut 40%, and so on). The percentage of funds cut a year from fossil fuel subsidies will be allocated to renewable energy research and development

subsidies, mimicking the different kinds of subsidies previously available to fossil fuel subsidies.

Policy Analysis

This policy proposal will eliminate federal fossil fuel subsidies over a gradual time scale and will companies to adapt to the changing allocation of funds. Simultaneously they will be subsidized in return to invest in renewable energy. In effectively reducing the United States' annual carbon dioxide contribution, the first step in the process is to eliminate the incentives given to the fossil fuel industry by the federal government. Out of the G7 countries, the United States ranks the worst, continuing to heavily subsidize fossil fuels [6]. All G7 countries pledged to eliminate their fossil fuel subsidies by 2025, and while some have held to that commitment more than others, the United States ranks last in terms of progress, subsidizing domestic coal mining production, fossil fuel production,

and fossil fuel-based power generation [6]. Fossil fuel subsidies ramp up the use of coal, oil and gas, exponentially damaging the climate and speeding up the harmful effects of climate change. When the federal government subsidizes fossil fuels, they are supporting an unsustainable form of energy that is damaging the environment and people's health [7]. Between 2030 and 2050, the World Health Organization estimates climate change will cause 250,000 deaths, due in part to harmful fossil fuel emissions [11]. At recent oil prices of US\$50 per barrel, tax subsidies push nearly half of new, or developing oil production into profitability [8]. This can increase US oil production to 17 billion barrels over the next few decades; equivalent to six billion tons of carbon dioxide emissions [8]. Erickson et. al also finds that in Texas's Permian Basin, 40% of the oil produced in subsidy-dependent [8]. When the prices of crude oil are lower, subsidies become more crucial [8]. Without federal subsidies, it is estimated that the price of global crude oil would rise about one dollar per barrel [8]. In estimating how this increase would affect consumers, an increase in 2010 from 70 dollars a barrel to 80 dollars a barrel and gas prices did go past three dollars a gallon [12]. This increase would not greatly inhibit the consumer, but would allow them to look for more sustainable energy alternatives.

Removing federal and state support for fossil fuel will provide a fiscal benefit and demonstrate US compliance with

G20 commitments, putting the US back on target to stay below two degrees Celsius warming [8]. There is much at risk with fossil fuel production. Total anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions have continued to increase over 1970 to 2010 with larger absolute decadal increases toward the end of this period [9]. Carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuel combustion and industrial processes contributed to about 78 percent of the total greenhouse gas emission increase from 1970 to 2010, with a similar percentage contribution for the period 2000-2010 [9]. Scientists are confident that humans are causing these devastating issues to climate. Subsidizing the fossil fuel industry, as shown above, is statistically proven to increase the production of fossil fuels, continuing to pollute the atmosphere. It is also shown above that removing subsidies will have a limited impact on consumers. In transitioning these funds to renewable energy investment, Professor Jeffrey Sachs of The Earth Institute at Columbia University describes the cost of the transition: "The incremental costs of decarbonization are likely to be under 1 % of annual national income for typical economies, and for some economies much less than that. The benefits of stopping climate change and improving public health would be vastly greater" [10]. With the addition of subsidies to aid the transition to renewable energy, that cost will likely be less to American citizens.

Next Steps

Through the analysis of the effectiveness of this proposal, it is recommended that this policy be implemented. In order for this policy to be implemented, the most practical route is for a bill to be proposed to Congress, in order to effectively time out federal fossil fuel subsidies at the scale recommended in this proposal. The bill can be proposed in either the House of Representatives or the Senate, and a representative must sponsor the bill. The bill will then have to pass through both houses of congress, and be signed by the president in order to be enacted. In the current political climate, the policy will likely pass if there are more Democrats in congress, as both the current administration and congressional Republicans have shown resistance to progressive climate policy, particularly policy that attacks the fossil fuel industry. Additionally, a future proposal could introduce a tax to fossil fuel industries, in addition to the redaction of the federal subsidies. However, additional research is required to investigate how a tax could be feasibly implemented, such as assessing if pollution should be taxed at the source, or if it should be added as a block tax.

Key Facts

- The United States Federal Government gives the fossil fuel industry \$10-\$52 billion dollars a year in subsidies
- Between 2011 and 2015, climate change induced weather and natural disasters has an annual average cost of \$10.8 billion

- Ninety-seven percent of climate scientists agree that global warming trends over the past century are very likely due to human activities

Talking Points

- Despite widespread scientific consensus that fossil fuels are destroying the earth, the United States Federal Government continues to subsidize the industry
- Eradicating the United States Government's fossil fuel subsidies will improve the health of the climate and of humans, it will shift the United States onto a more sustainable route of governance, and it will show the world that the United States is committed to the climate
- Implementing a five-year cumulative reduction of fossil fuel subsidies while simultaneously diverting the redacted funds to renewable energy research and development will allow for fossil fuel companies to adapt to the shift, while incentivizing renewable energy production

Action Plan Snapshot

In order to implement this policy, a few areas need to be addressed in order for it to be successful. The policy needs to have communal momentum behind it in order for representatives to feel pressure to vote to pass the bill. In order to generate national support for this

proposal, educational campaigns will be sent out to various local governments, for local mayors and regional governors to show their support for the plan. New York Governor Andrew Cuomo or Boston Mayor Marty Walsh could hold some sway in supporting this bill, as they govern over regions that are progressive in combating climate change, and have large populations under their control. As local leaders endorse the plan, their constituents are more likely to endorse the policy. With support from the American people, their representatives will likely feel pressure to vote for the bill. To aid the likelihood of the bill passing, the bill should be supported by both Republicans and Democrats in order to generate bipartisan support. There will likely be enormous opposition from the fossil fuel industry, therefore environmental lobbyists such as the Sierra Club or Greenpeace will have to be proactive in supporting this bill to Washington. Overall, the enactment of this policy into law will likely rest in the hands of Senate Republicans, if they continue to hold the majority of the Senate. Therefore, the greatest obstacle to passage will be convincing them to support the bill.

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Foreign Policy

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Separation of Power: Mandating Annual Congressional Reauthorizations of Military Force

By Jack Carlos Mindich, jm2263@cornell.edu

Under the expansion of executive power and the dissipation of formal declarations of war, congressional oversight of military action has dwindled. Congress should modify the 1973 War Powers Resolution to mandate yearly votes to extend Authorizations for Use of Military Force, AUMFs, in order to ensure that representatives and senators make active decisions regarding the validity of military action and do not passively cede authority to the executive branch.

Background

Under the Constitution oversight for the military was based on 18th Century practices. In Article II, the President is granted the role of commander in chief while the Congress is charged with the power to declare war [1, 2]. However, changing international norms have made formal declarations of war exceedingly rare; Congress has not formally declared war since it did so against the Axis countries during World War II [3]. Though, initially, Congress played a major role in sanctioning almost all military action, the Cold War and the immediacy of threats in a nuclear weapon world meant that the executive continually pushed the boundaries of its authority through covert action and untraditional warfare [4]. The development of these alternative methods has created strife between the executive and the legislature. The Vietnam War proved to be a breaking point as Congress responded to presidential overreach by passing the War Powers Resolution of 1973 over the veto of President Richard Nixon [5]. However, though the act ostensibly provides Congressional oversight, by requiring any

congressional approval for military deployment longer than 60 days, the legislature has been unwilling to exercise its authority [6]. In the past two decades, AUMFs have been interpreted by the Bush, Obama and Trump administrations as extending in perpetuity and applying to broad sets of circumstances not foreseen by Congress under their initial authorizations. In fact, all troops in the Middle East today are acting under AUMFs passed in 2001 and 2002 in response to the terror attacks of September 11, 2001 [7].

Policy Idea

Building off of the 1973 War Powers Resolution, Congress should specify that the House and Senate must positively reaffirm any Authorizations of Use of Military Force each year for them to remain in effect. In addition, Congress should stipulate that *prior* to preemptive force, and before the end the 60-day deadline for retaliatory attacks, any interventions in countries not previously and expressly covered by an AUMF must be authorized by the Senate and the House of Representatives.

Policy Analysis

The AUMFs under which the President is currently justifying military action are vague and were never meant to last as long or authorize as broad a swath of conduct as they have since been interpreted to. The AUMF passed in the wake of 9/11 held that: The President is authorized to use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, or harbored such organizations or persons, in order to prevent any future acts of international terrorism against the United States by such nations, organizations or persons. [8]

Clearly, the plain text of this statute seems to confine executive authority to actors directly involved with the 9/11 attacks in 2001. Yet, it has been interpreted far more broadly since, allowing, in practice, for the President to authorize military action anywhere-- as long as there is some connection to the 'War on Terror.[9]' The stretching of the AUMF is so extreme that in 2017 when four Army Sergeants died in Niger, a number of senators who served on the Senate Armed

Services Committee reported that they were unaware that troops were in Niger at all [10]. And these campaigns are expensive. In Niger, the Air Force began construction on a \$50 million airstrip and deployed close to 1,000 troops to the nation [11]. All this in a country that senators did not know the military was deployed in at all. Clearly there is a need for a modification of congressional oversight. Under a framework where all troop deployments were positively affirmed by congressional authorization, senatorial ignorance of deployments would be eliminated. Congress would have knowledge of, and control over, what countries in which the military uses force.

Yet, one thing that has become clear over the past decade is that Congress, while uncomfortable with the extension of executive power, does not want to create a constitutional crisis by directly overruling the President when it does not have to. Under the Obama and Trump administrations' aggressive reading of executive powers as commander in chief, Congress need not act for the current military campaigns to continue [12]. In an electoral system where the status-quo is safer than action for incumbents, for many senators and representatives regulating military action is not a worthwhile gamble. Yet, most members of Congress *do* agree that the executive branch is exceeding its authority. In late 2017, the House voted 366-30 to pass a non-binding resolution stating that American involvement in the Yemeni Civil War was not justified under prior AUMFs [13]. This suggests that the vast majority of the House would not have authorized the strikes if

given the chance. Yet, the current framework requires a direct repeal of an AUMF and the non-binding resolution shows that Congress still gravitates towards a status-quo option. This pattern shows that working within the current legislative framework will not have sufficient impact; a new resolution is required.

Furthermore, the Trump administration has indicated that it will not heed congressional mandates to remove of troops under the current 1973 Resolution, believing Congress does not have such power due to Supreme Court precedent from *INS v. Chandha* [14]. Revising the War Powers Resolution to mandate active decisions either accepting or barring military authority would solve this problem as the status quo would not be an option. It would force an involved choice by legislators and it would do so *prior* to future deployment. It would represent a necessary and sufficient curb on executive authority and would force Congress to be proactive in their oversight role.

Next Steps

Considering the Congressional voting record and the current reluctance by Congress to challenge the executive lest a constitutional crisis develop, enacting a new articulation of the War Powers is critical. The next steps are to form a bipartisan consensus among non-interventionist Republicans and Democrats and to lobby local representatives and senators to support the Resolution. In addition, Congress should prepare itself for potential legal challenges from the executive branch if attempts to deny

Congress its oversight power by relying on *INS v. Chandha*.

Key Facts

- The Constitution clearly grants *Congress* the power to declare war
- The initial War Powers resolution was vetoed by President Nixon and had to be passed by override.
- Most military action today is based off of 16-17-year-old AUMFs [15].

Talking Points

- The United States has deployed 1,000 troops and spent millions of dollars in a country where Senators did not realize any troops were deployed at all [16].
- The House of Representatives has passed non-binding resolutions attempting to curb executive activism without effect [17].
- Modifying the 1973 Resolution would force Congress to take a proactive stand on war powers.

Action Plan Snapshot

The next steps are to convince Congress to pass legislation asserting its power and hemming in the activist positions taken by the executive branch over the past decades. Many small conservatives in Congress also oppose blank checks to the military and provide an opportunity to form bipartisan coalitions. Senators such as Rand Paul on the right and Ron Wyden and Bernie Sanders on the left have been major proponents of rolling back the previous AUMFs.

Students can initiate discussions to raise awareness of

the issue on campus and create a broad coalition. Once formed, the coalition can work to lobby their local officials to vote for full repeals of AUMFs instead of non-binding resolutions. They can also contact media sources to attempt to draw more coverage of the issue. Finally, they can lobby the university to support the legislation.

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Changing Hegemons: Why rising Anti-American sentiment in the Muslim world should worry the United States

By Hassan Bin Sabir, hb362@cornell.edu

A history of American foreign policy missteps in the Middle East and South Asia has not just fomented widespread anti-American sentiment within the Muslim world, it has also provided China the opportunity to offer an alternative to the region. And the Chinese are doing just that with the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). China's biggest Belt and Road project is taking place in Pakistan, with a plan to develop Pakistan's infrastructure on a grand scale. Since the project's inception, China has succeeded in supplanting the U.S. in Pakistan, with the country drifting away from America. And, unless the U.S. acts soon, Pakistan may just be the first of many Muslim majority states who do the same.

Background

American foreign policy decisions in the Middle East and South Asia, during the Cold War and after, have only created more problems for both the U.S. and the region. In Iran, the CIA had a central role in the 1953 coup that brought down democratically elected Iranian Prime Minister Muhammad Mossadegh, setting off a series of events that culminated in the 1979 Iranian Revolution and the tense U.S.-Iranian relationship of today [1]. To defeat the Soviets in Afghanistan, the U.S. supported the mujahideen who later morphed into the terrorist outfits that America and its allies have been fighting there since 2001 [2]. There's also a strong argument that America's mishandling of the Iraq War contributed heavily to the rise of ISIS [3]. Conflicts elsewhere, such as Libya, present similar tales.

The fallout from this history of American intervention in the region has been a drastic rise in anti-American sentiment among Muslims. Most policymakers in

Washington see this primarily as a security threat for the U.S.; however, that is an excessively narrow view. At a time when China and the United States are competing for influence across the globe, a lack of support for the U.S. in the region essentially opens the door to Chinese influence. The Chinese realize that. The BRI is at the center of these efforts to establish China as a major player, with the country looking to spend close to \$1 trillion dollars on infrastructure projects across 68 countries [4]. The largest project in the BRI is concentrated in Pakistan, with China investing \$46 billion in the country over the next 10 to 15 years [5]. If the Pakistani model succeeds, other countries in the region will begin to see the benefits of an alliance with China, eventually resulting in the country supplanting the U.S. in the region.

Policy Idea

If the U.S. is to restore support among Muslims and counter growing Chinese influence in the region, it is imperative that a

fundamental foreign policy shift take place. The U.S. must shed military intervention and the use of covert activities as its go-to foreign policy tool in the region. To do so, rather than stoking conflict and engaging in war, America must act as a peacemaker within the region, a neutral arbiter which deescalates conflicts and leaves countries better off than they were before. Short-term, seeking political solutions to conflicts in Afghanistan and Yemen while also embarking on an ambitious long-term redevelopment strategy in these countries offers the best place to begin the process of boosting American popularity in the region while counteracting increasing Chinese involvement.

Policy Analysis

The adoption of a non-military centric approach with respect to the Middle East would mark a stark shift for U.S. foreign policy. However, it is a necessary change. A 2015 Pew survey showed that, although the U.S. is viewed

favorably by the majority of the population in most regions across the globe, the same does not hold true for Muslim majority states. Of the Muslim majority countries included in the survey, the vast majority of the population in all but two states (Nigeria and Indonesia), held largely unfavorable views of the U.S. And in Israel, while nearly 90% of Israeli Jews held favorable views of America, only 48% of Israeli Arabs responded favorably [6].

The fundamental question, then, is what should the United States do and how? With the BRI, China is taking a leaf out of the U.S. Cold War playbook. The project is a modern-day version of the Marshall Plan as it was implemented in Western Europe. Instead of investing into reconstruction like the U.S. did after World War II, China is pumping money into infrastructural development that is unprecedented for these developing nations. The Marshall Plan provided the U.S. with incredible influence and popular support in the region, as well as strategic partnerships that continue to exist today [7]. Opposing the BRI would be a policy akin to the Soviet Union's opposition to the Marshall Plan, and carry the same ramifications [8] both in terms of regional support as well as placing the U.S. on a crash course with China. Instead, the U.S. must counter the BRI with a development project of its own and rely on its past experience with both the Marshall Plan and the provision of aid to developing nations with internal structural impediments to ensure that the U.S. initiative is more successful than the BRI, which has been facing stumbling blocks recently [9].

The proposed U.S. initiative must be centered on Afghanistan and Yemen, at least to begin with. Although both countries are currently ravaged by war, the U.S. possesses the influence necessary for pushing through peaceful settlements of the existing conflicts, and the subsequent redevelopment plan. The U.S. is allies with the key stakeholders in either case, the Afghan and Saudi governments, and can use this influence to push for peace. Short-term, a U.S. led peace initiative would provide increased popular support to America, as local populations in both countries are desperate for it. Peace is also important for the success of any redevelopment project, as the Marshall Plan shows [7]. And so, following the resolution of these conflicts, the U.S. must work in tandem with local governments to provide economic assistance, geared towards a mix of infrastructural development and the improvement of social services. Emphasis must also be placed on initiating the necessary structural reforms that will ensure the success of any foreign aid program, as it is paramount for U.S. interests that the investments it makes positively impacts the lives of ordinary citizens [7].

Next Steps

In the short-term, U.S. foreign policy needs to be geared towards ensuring the swift and peaceful settlement of conflicts in Afghanistan and Yemen.

In Afghanistan, this would involve the formulation of a cohesive strategy for dialogue with the Taliban. For negotiations to succeed, the U.S. must leverage support from regional stakeholders such as Pakistan that hold

considerable influence over the Taliban. This would also offer an opportunity to improve relations with Pakistan, which has long been calling for such a settlement.

The conflict in Yemen is essentially a product of the animosity between Saudi Arabia and Iran. If the U.S. is to halt the war, it must utilize its ties with the Saudi regime to de-escalate the conflict and bring an end to the worst humanitarian crisis in the world today. In doing so, overtures also need to be made towards Iran, which is a major player in the region. The U.S. must use the peace process in Yemen to establish a stable working relationship with Iran, which is necessary for long-term U.S. interests for peace in the region and to regain support among Shiite Muslims.

In conjunction with these peace-building efforts, the U.S. must work to initiate structural reforms within Afghanistan, and a consolidated humanitarian aid program in Yemen. To do so, the U.S. should call on regional experts within academia as well as organizations and individuals working in the region. These initiatives will be the first steps towards a fundamental reorientation of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East.

Key Facts

- U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East and South Asia has historically relied on military intervention and covert operations and has had far-reaching unintended consequences. [1][2][3]
- A 2015 Pew survey showed that while the U.S. is viewed favorably in most regions across the world, of the

Muslim majority states included in the survey, the vast majority of the populations in all but two states held unfavorable opinions of the U.S. [5]

- China is also emerging as a force in the region, with the country expected to spend nearly \$1 trillion on infrastructure projects across 68 countries as part of its Belt and Road Initiative. [6]

Talking Points

- A series of foreign policy missteps in the Middle East, dating back to the Cold War era have resulted in the rise of anti-American sentiment in the Middle East.
- This anti-American sentiment has coincided with the rise of China as a global power, with the Belt and Road Initiative at the center of Chinese efforts to expand.
- The largest BRI project is situated in Pakistan, a Muslim majority state, that has drifted away from U.S. influence following large-scale Chinese investment into infrastructural projects.
- The possible success of the Pakistani model could attract other Muslim majority states to seek an alliance with China, minimizing U.S. influence in the Middle East and South Asia.
- For the U.S. to successfully counter growing Chinese influence, it is imperative for it to regain support in the Muslim world, which it can begin to do by pursuing

peaceful settlements to conflicts in Afghanistan and Yemen followed by expansive redevelopment plans.

Action Plan Snapshot

- American foreign policy in the Middle East has essentially reproduced the same mistakes over the past five to six decades. Therefore, it is imperative for the next generation of policymakers to recognize the faults of past policies and find new ways of moving forward in the region. And so, on college campuses this can take place through concerted efforts by faculty and student organizations to propagate revisionist historical accounts that analyze past foreign policy missteps.
- College campuses also offer uniquely diverse communities, with Muslim students with roots in the region attending most universities. To get to the root causes of anti-American sentiment in the region, it is necessary to initiate dialogue that includes them in the conversation, as they can offer unique perspectives that get to the heart of anti-Americanism in the Muslim world. Any policy shift must consider the sentiments of local populations.
- On a national level, the U.S. government must establish special task-forces and advisory councils that comprise representatives from the region, academia

and non-governmental organizations to formulate short and long-term strategies with a view to regaining trust within local communities and finding alternatives to military intervention to achieve goals in the region.

- Communities must lobby local representatives to raise the issue in Congress and press for an urgent shift in U.S. foreign policy in the region, with a push for the swift and peaceful settlement of conflicts in Afghanistan and Yemen.
- This process must coincide with renewed and vigorous engagement with actors and individuals working on the ground to develop cohesive strategies that identify key areas for humanitarian aid to alleviate the crisis in Yemen and areas for structural reform in Afghanistan, as well as the adoption of a timetable for the implementation of these programs.

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The Venezuelan Refugee Crisis: Reasserting American Leadership in a Hemisphere in Crisis

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As Venezuela is overwhelmed by economic turmoil and political angst in response to the restrictive and corrupt Maduro regime, the resulting refugee crisis calls for regional cooperation and leadership from the United States as the hemisphere's dominant economic power. Cooperation between the US, Canada, and the South American nations most burdened by the growing flow of Venezuelan refugees would ensure safety for those displaced while also mitigating much of the financial burden on nearby countries.

Background:

In 2013, following the death of longtime Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, Nicolas Maduro took control of the socialist government. Since Maduro's inauguration, increased economic turmoil and political repression have caused many to flee the struggling nation. A decrease in oil prices led to hyperinflation and increased prices for everyday goods. [1] The dire economic situation has left many unable to afford basic necessities; surveys conducted revealed that 90% of Venezuelans struggled to buy food and three quarters of the populace lost weight in 2017. [2] Corrupt government leaders have also funneled money away from citizens, thus exacerbating an already significant problem. [3] The healthcare system is also struggling to deal with the consequences of such widespread starvation and malnutrition, with a reported one-fifth of the nation's medical personnel having fled over the last four years. [4] Additionally, repression of political opponents and restrictions on basic political rights have led to unrest and unease among the populace. As a result of these compounding problems, over 2.3 million Venezuelans have fled

the nation since 2014, putting this crisis on par with the widely covered Syrian Refugee Crisis. [5] Of these migrants, over 600,000 have fled to Colombia and many others have fled to border towns in Brazil, placing an immense burden on the respective governments and also risking the safety of migrants who are vulnerable to kidnappings and attacks by drug cartels along the forested borders. [6]

Policy Idea:

In order to promote peace and to alleviate the issues associated with a widespread refugee crisis, the US must support international cooperation among regional powers and neighboring countries to create clear standards for the intake of migrants and funding for security and housing. As part of this initiative, the cooperative must establish direct channels for increased funding to be dispersed among welcoming nations and extend refugee status so that those fleeing Venezuela may enter nearby nations without fear of persecution or deportation.

Policy Analysis:

There are two approaches to dealing with refugee crises, one that

targets the source and one that mitigates the widespread effects on nearby nations. Attempts to deal with Caracas and to alleviate suffering within Venezuela have been largely ineffective, as the Maduro administration has refused to accept humanitarian aid. International sanctions have harmed the general population and have failed to pressure leaders to enact necessary reforms. [7] Recent attempts to extend UN sanctions on Venezuela have been fruitless as Russia and China have proven their willingness to wield veto power to protect economic interests in the oil-rich nation. Military intervention would further destabilize the region and exacerbate the refugee crisis without promising the desired regime change and democratic reforms.

Thus, considering the difficulty of eliminating the issue at its source, it is most important for regional powers to work towards mitigating the negative consequences of a mass emigration event. Facing a massive influx of refugees, nations such as Colombia and Brazil have experienced backlash against their open door policies. In Colombia, nearly 2,000 migrants have been arrested,

feeding growing anti-immigrant rhetoric. [8] Similarly, a recent incident of arson where locals set fire to migrant housing highlights the safety concerns that many refugees face. [9] Since 2014, the US has received more Venezuelan asylum applications than any other nation. Yet, only a select few have been allowed into the US, doing little to lessen the burden on other destinations. [10] The US has provided some humanitarian aid to surrounding nations, donating nearly \$14 million in 2018 [11] and totaling \$46 million in aid to nations accepting Venezuelan refugees since 2017. [12] Although the US contributed more than any other country (accounting for more than half of total funding this year), the UN Human Rights Commission reports that only 55% of the necessary funding has been provided worldwide in 2018. [13] The formation of an international cooperative on refugee policy would work towards a more equal dispersal of the financial burden while also helping meet the existing need.

Another one of the main contributing factors to the overwhelming burden on certain countries is an uneven policy on the acceptance of refugees and an inability to protect and pay for immigrants' necessities. The 1984 Cartagena Declaration adopted a broader definition of refugees among Latin American nations that offers asylum to those struggling with "massive violation of human rights or other circumstances which have seriously disturbed public order." [14] The formation of an international cooperative would dictate that nations who have failed to recognize the 1951 Refugee Convention, including Guyana,

would agree to the basic principles that those seeking asylum or refuge are guaranteed protection. [15]

Overall, the cooperative would clarify a unified regional policy in assisting and accepting refugees, thus spreading the burden over many nations and preventing adverse effects on those who are willing to take in refugees in their time of need.

Next Steps

In order to form this regional cooperative, the US must take a leadership role and engage with other nations in the Americas (and perhaps Spain, which also holds cultural and historical ties to the region) to gauge competing interests and potential willingness to contribute. The diplomatic campaign could involve movement at the UN (although less likely due to Russian and Chinese opposition), engagement with the Organization of American States (OAS), and individual negotiation with specific nations intimately involved in the crisis. The US, in offering extensive financial support, increased willingness to take in more refugees, and other nation-specific economic incentives to encourage broad involvement and commitment to the common goal, will claim a central role in the talks.

Key Facts

- 75% of Venezuelans reported losing weight in 2017, losing an average of 19 pounds [16]
- 2.3 million Venezuelans have fled the nation since 2014 [17]
- 600,000 Venezuelan refugees have fled to Colombia alone [18]

Talking Points

- It will be extremely difficult to alleviate the internal Venezuelan issues, since the government has resisted international pressure and overzealous intervention would exacerbate the crisis
- The formation of an international cooperative would disperse the financial burden among involved nations in order to meet the existing 45% funding gap reported by the UNHCR
- The cooperative would clarify refugee and asylum laws so as to ensure access and protection for refugees

Action Plan Snapshot

On campus, students must mobilize to educate each other on the humanitarian crisis and its effects on the region. Fundraising events to help raise money for refugees in Colombia and Brazil would also spread awareness while providing necessary funds. Additionally, individuals and committed groups ought to lobby leaders to engage more deeply with this crisis. While lobbying, individuals must target members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and representatives, particularly from the state of Florida due to the large Venezuelan presence in the state. Increased awareness and extensive fundraising would be crucial in supporting the refugees.

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A New Path to Dealing with North Korea: Cooperation

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After years of tension and provocations ranging from joint US-South Korean military exercises and intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) tests to harsh sanctions, and plenty of verbal eruptions, the U.S. and North Korea are on the brink of a potential deal for the first time since the Clinton era. As South Korea continues to make encouraging progress with its northern neighbor, it is time for the U.S. to weigh in and complete or halt negotiations. As unpredictable as President Trump has been, he should learn that granting official recognition to North Korea and cooperating with the international community will give him the best chance at an effective deal.

Background

The United States' conflict with North Korea has been well-documented since the Korean War, perhaps best exemplified by the fact that the war itself has not yet been ended officially. [1] Throughout the lineage of Kims who have ruled the small nation, the number of provocations has increased over time, crescendoing between 2012 and 2016, when 88 total provocative actions ("trigger" events that provoked a response) took place, the bulk of these were related to North Korea's continuous effort to grow its nuclear capabilities. [2] After years of failed tests, the North Koreans fired off a string of successful trials, including the deployment of a hydrogen bomb, a move that revealed their current capabilities and potential to rapidly advance. [3] In response, U.S. President Donald Trump vowed to bring "fire and fury," daring North Korea to further action, while later on dubbing Kim Jong-Un a "little rocket man." [4] A year removed, the landscape has shifted considerably: South Korean President Moon Jae-In has

convened three summits with Kim, while President Trump entered uncharted waters by sitting down with Kim Jong-Un in June of 2018 in Singapore. [5] The circumstances create a fitting parallel to the Agreed Framework, which the Clinton Administration developed from 1994 to 2001 in a similar environment of nuclear uncertainty for the U.S., which aimed to take advantage of economic pressures and strike a deal with North Korea, yet ultimately fell through as Clinton left office before the Framework could be finished. [6] Now, even with Kim's "good will" desire to reach an agreement and achieve denuclearization during President Trump's current term, there still is the complication of North Korea's secrecy. [7] Kim has shifted North Korea's in-your-face nuclear enrichment approach to a far more secretive, yet equally effective one. Publicly available evidence suggests that this conversion has been going on for some time now. [8] While ICBMs are no longer on display at marches, they are still most certainly being developed by North Korean

engineers. [9] Meanwhile, the South Koreans have not been working in sync with the U.S. While Moon Jae-In has eagerly pressed on with potential peace talks, the U.S. has sat back hesitantly, dissatisfied with Kim's promises. [10] Bearing in mind these circumstances, an ultimate agreement seems unlikely. However, it is time for the U.S. to rethink its position and strategy so that there is light at the end of this tunnel.

Policy Idea

To successfully push peace talks, the Trump Administration must do what no hegemonic power would normally prefer: hand over the controls. Accomplishing this requires two steps: first, acting in a supporting role to South Korea and second, coalescing an international consensus and acting body. By moving from a leading role to more of an influential role, the U.S. can be less burdened by slow diplomacy and protect the negotiations by building up an international body to back the agreement, increasing pressure on North Korea to stay in line and seriously challenging

Russia, China, or other countries that would otherwise look to exploit the situation.

Policy Analysis

The most critical aspect of this alternative is to allow South Korea to lead negotiations, as they are better equipped to lead talks with North Korea in a multitude of areas. Perhaps most upfront is that South Korea can be far more culturally relatable than the United States, especially with Moon Jae-In's pledge to cultural exchanges. [11] Beyond this, South Korea has been far more proactive in its pursuit of peace while the U.S. has remained stagnant since its July summit in Singapore. [12] Moon Jae-In has already reached agreements to end hostilities with North Korea and establish bilateral efforts in transportation, tourism, and even a joint Olympics hosting bid in 2032. South Korea's boldness in these negotiations has led to North Korea clearly being warmer to South Korea, while the United States has a lukewarm relationship at best. [13] As a result, while the U.S. and North Korea dig in their heels in talks, South Korea can act as a middle man to help open dialogue where it was previously blocked. Already, Seoul has been assuming this role, as it tries to convince the U.S. to join the two Koreas in declaring an official end to the Korean War while keeping a close definition of "denuclearization" for the North. [14] Time and time again, the United States has failed to create substantial progress with North Korea – even the Singaporean summit was viewed as having accomplished little. [20] Why not let a more effective South Korea help reach shared diplomatic goals?

There may be U.S. fear that it will not achieve its goals without leading. For example, on the term "denuclearization", the Trump Administration's key demand is a full relinquishing of all nuclear weapons. [13] Moon Jae-In agrees with this, saying that in no situation would South Korea formally recognize North Korea if any part of it remained a nuclear state. [17] South Korean and U.S. efforts and goals align; the U.S. should not fear allowing South Korea to take the lead in negotiations.

In the meantime, the U.S. could re-shift its focus to be more of an influencer, by appealing to the United Nations and allies to buy into an agreement with North Korea. By stepping back, the U.S. can foster a global agreement on North Korea, which in turn will create unified, global consequences for North Korea if it does diverge from the stipulations. This can also help with U.S. fears that China may be undermining peace talk progress. [15] Large, neighboring countries like Russia and China are unpredictable and could potentially undercut current efforts; however, if these countries are included in such global consensus, their voices of support can actually further advance peace talks rather than undermine them. [16] President Trump may criticize the inefficiencies of international governance, but there is no denying that there is strength in numbers. Particularly with such a critical negotiation, generating international consensus can solidify and enforce a strong agreement. [21]

America has tried every other option, from ignorance to engagement, all to no avail. Physical confrontation would be to rush into battle blind, a foolish and

potentially catastrophic move. [18] So, we are left with one final option: diplomacy. Kim Jong-Un's motivations are unclear, but he has envisioned himself as the leader who sets North Korea down a path of economic development. [19] This ambition provides the U.S. the best opportunity to make peace with North Korea in years, but it cannot be done alone. Rather, by supporting effective and bold negotiations from South Korea with joint-objectives, the U.S. can back both negotiation efforts and the development of international consensus without overextending itself.

Next Steps

In the coming time, there are several objectives the U.S. can pursue to aid the transition:

- President Trump should meet with Moon Jae-In to discuss objectives in order to be unified in their negotiation goals.
- President Trump should begin using international summits to garner support from the international community for an agreement with North Korea. This means declaring support but also preparing stringent, all-around sanctions in case of violations.
- President Trump should then be willing to declare an end to the Korean War. A demonstration of good faith this significant will go a long way in aiding efforts to reach Kim Jong-Un. However, in return, there can be demands for the immediate destruction of nuclear sites with international oversight, and

the threat of an immediate retraction and squeeze of sanctions and military pressure if North Korea provokes in any way.

Key Facts

- Under similar economic circumstances and nuclear uncertainty, the Clinton Administration also attempted to strike a deal with North Korea from 1994-2001 in the form of the Agreed Framework, however, it fell through at the end of Clinton's terms.
- North Korea has continuously increased the number and severity of their provocations (pre-negotiations); specifically, in the 88 provocative actions from 2012-2016 and the string of successful tests in 2017 that culminated in an H-bomb detonation.
- South Korea and North Korea have held 3 summits in which significant progress has been made: they have established an "era of no war", halting military drills aimed at each other, submitted a joint Olympic Games hosting bid for 2032, planned to create a liaison office, and constructed a loose timeline to establish travel between the two countries.

Talking Points

- The South Korean government's objectives are aligned with the U.S.'s and is in a far better position to negotiate and reach an

agreement with North Korea.

- By fostering international support, not only will it eliminate the risk of undermining by deviant nations but will further incentivize North Korea to stay in line.
- Kim Jong-Un's economic goals provide an opportunity to reach a deal that has been missed for decades. Missing it again will be the worst of these lost opportunities.

Action Plan Snapshot

The only way any of this can happen is with the full support of the U.S. government, not just the President. In this way, there should be considerable action lobbying key leaders in the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and House Foreign Affairs Committee. In the Senate, lobbyists should focus on Sen. Bob Corker and Sen. Bob Menendez, while in the House, the focus should be on Rep. Ed Royce and Rep. Eliot Engel. Successfully lobbying these politicians can lead to growing consensus within the committees as a whole, which will build the momentum for the U.S. to move forward with this new stance.

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Accomplishing American Interests in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq: US Relations with Turkey as a Centerpiece

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The United States has interests in precipitating statehood for a Free Kurdistan in northern Iraq, which would be an ideological victory for self-determination and create a pro-American state in a hostile region. The anticipated reaction of Erdogan's Turkey on unilateral American action is typically viewed as a roadblock in the independence calculus, but direct negotiations with Turkey would make statehood more likely, less risky, and improve relations among all three parties. Negotiations with Turkey, which would involve condemnation of the YPG and economic relief for Kurdish recognition, are key to guaranteeing American interests in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Background

The Kurds comprise the world's largest ethnic group without a homeland. There are Kurdish minorities in Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Turkey, though the Kurdistan Region of Iraq is the closest Kurdish population to gaining complete autonomy. This population especially has suffered great persecution by seeking a homeland, significantly in the Anfal Genocide at the end of the Iran-Iraq War, in which Saddam Hussein's regime killed between 50,000 and 182,000 Kurds. [1] With the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime, the Kurds formed the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in northern Iraq; its partial autonomy is recognized internationally as the de facto legitimate authority in the region. [2] Recently, as the Islamic State expanded in Iraq, the Iraqi Kurdish Peshmerga forces proved effective fighters on the front lines and strong allies with American leadership. [3] In September 2017, an independence referendum passed

with 93% approval. The Baghdad government sought retaliation economically and militarily, including by seizing the major Kurdish-held oil-producing city of Kirkuk. This paper will address the quest for Kurdish statehood ambitions in Iraq specifically.

Though Erdogan government had historically strong economic and sectarian ties with the Kurdistan Regional Government, the most pressing roadblock for the Kurdish cause in the status quo is opposition from Turkey. Other Kurdish separatist groups have posed a significant challenge to settlement as the Erdogan government views them as a threat to Turkish nationalism. The Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) is a Kurdish terrorist group in Turkey and has been relentlessly targeted by the Erdogan regime, along with the People's Protection Units (YPG), a Kurdish group operating from Syria. [4] After a 2016 coup in Turkey, the Erdogan government needed to clamp down on Kurdish

separatism to maintain core support, leading him to denounce the 2017 referendum and threaten the KRG. [5] Today, with the Turkish economy reeling and Erdogan's Justice and Development Party in need of economic relief, Turkey and the United States could make a mutually beneficial deal to facilitate independence for the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, enhancing regional stability and checking growing axes for instability.

Policy Idea

The United States should look to its ally in Turkey as key to facilitating Kurdish independence rather than as an expected cost to unilateral action. The goal of such negotiations should be to gain mutual support for peaceful secession of the Kurdistan region from Iraq to deter the governments in Baghdad or Tehran from taking preventative action. The United States would condemn the PKK and its offshoots in the case of Turkish compliance with this proposal and

threaten to reimpose sanctions of August 2018 in the case of noncompliance.

Policy Analysis

The Trump administration has been presented a new opportunity to give the Kurds a national homeland. The Erdogan government would have several reasons to accept a Kurdish state despite traditional fears of rising domestic Kurdish nationalism. In fact, the proposed offer could serve more as a means for saving face and achieving a mutually beneficial outcome than as an imposition of will.

Firstly, for Turkey, working with Iraqi Kurdish leaders could help control Kurdish nationalist groups like the PKK and YPG. Masoud Barzani, the former President of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, traveled to Turkey in 2012 and called on the PKK to end its militant campaign and cross-border raids, even saying that he “will not allow the PKK to prevail in the region.” [6] To the Kurds in Iraq, the activities of these groups threaten to derail their long-fought diplomatic mission, which is why an Erdogan-Barzani alliance would strengthen the Anti-PKK campaign. To the international community, with the goal of a Kurdish homeland having been achieved, the PKK and YPG terrorist mission would likely be further delegitimized. [7] The Erdogan government has been put under tremendous pressure to delegitimize the PKK, so it would be best for his regime to work with Barzani and the Iraqi Kurds rather than against them. [8]

Turkey and the KRG have historically been allies and have reason to continue their alliance. A

May 2012 pipeline deal proved that cooperation was not only possible but plausible, much to the chagrin of leaders in Baghdad. In 2017 1,300 Turkish companies operated out of the region while the KRG sent 550,000 barrels of oil per day to Turkey. [9] Stronger ties in trade would also help to alleviate the economy, which would make it easier for the Erdogan regime to address domestic unrest. [10] Further, both leaders of Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan are Sunnis who seek to contain the expanding Shia influence from Iran into Damascus and Baghdad. [11] An independent Kurdistan would significantly weaken the Iraqi government in Baghdad and check the expansion of Iranian Anti-American influence by disrupting the Shia Crescent.

This negotiation would likely undermine the relationship that America has with the Iraqi government in Baghdad, but the policy should still be pursued. First, the perception of America is already poor in Baghdad, with the 2018 parliamentary elections ending in a victory for the party led by Shiite firebrand Anti-American populist Moqtada al-Sadr, who opposes all American influence in Iraq, and this relationship is expected to only decline. [12] Second, the realignment of the region is still net beneficial to the United States, especially when considering the benefit to Israel, the only country to support the 2017 referendum, and the decrease in Turkish reliance on Russian oil. [13] America benefits more from a new pro-American state at the cost of sour relations from an already ideologically-opposed state. Finally, the anticipated success of an Iraqi Kurdish state with the help of US influence may inspire backlash

against al-Sadr and bring in more pro-American leaders to Iraq. [14]

This proposal takes an inherently pragmatic over idealistic view; that is, to achieve the ends of a national homeland for the Kurdish people, the interests of one group of Kurds (those in Syria, Turkey, and Iran who have been persecuted and have resorted to terrorism) must be sacrificed for the interests of another group of Kurds (those in Northern Iraq who have worked for decades to foster diplomacy). No sensible deal exists that could grant a homeland encompassing every Kurdish population, but this approach could give a national homeland to a stateless people.

Next Steps

Based on the immense potential to correct for historic oppression of the Kurdish people and help realign the region in favor of stabilizing powers, it is recommended that these negotiation tactics be used to facilitate an accord between the Republic of Turkey and the United States of America. National foreign policy leaders should press for a summit in which Presidents Trump and Erdogan can discuss the arrangements. American leaders across the board should pay increased attention to Turkish rights abuses, which proved effective in mounting diplomatic pressure to force President Erdogan to release American pastor Andrew Brunson and would likely incentivize action to legitimize the Turkish relationship with Kurdish groups. [15] Iraqi Kurdish representatives should emphasize the expected benefits to Turkish leaders in Ankara to make attendance at such a summit more likely.

Key Facts

- The Kurdish people is the largest ethnic group without a homeland
- In the late 1980s, Saddam Hussein's regime engaged in a genocide of between 50,000 and 182,000 Kurds in northern Iraq
- The Iraqi Kurdish independence referendum of September 2017 passed by a vote of 93%
- Since the attempted 2016 coup in Turkey, President Erdogan has become more repressive of the Kurdish minority and has launched attacks on perceived PKK strongholds [16]

Talking Points

- Turkey is generally considered a roadblock to unilateral action on Kurdistan, yet is a NATO ally
- Turkey stands to gain much from legitimizing a national Kurdish homeland, such as increasing bilateral trade with Kurdistan, checking the growing power of the Iran-Syria axis, and gaining a new ally to legitimize the fight against the PKK and YPG
- The United States has interests in aiding a historically pro-American group, checking the power of Anti-American forces in Baghdad and Tehran, and winning a victory for self-determination and independence characteristic of the American identity

Action Plan Snapshot

Within the Trump administration, different actors play different roles

in bringing the Turkish government to the negotiating table. Donald Trump's uneasy defense of Saudi Arabia in the wake of the murder of Jamal Khashoggi has hurt his personal credibility and ability to sway Turkish leaders. [17] Though ultimately, the final deal will be between Donald Trump and Recep Tayyip Erdogan, high-ranking advisors and secretaries play an equally important role.

First, John Bolton, the National Security Advisor, must play his part on the rhetoric of winning an ideological war in convincing the President of the importance of a Kurdish homeland. Bolton has spoken harshly on the need to confront Iranian influence in the Middle East and tends to view international relations in terms of legality, even addressing publicly the possibility of war with Iran. [18] For this reason, Bolton will also play an important role in negotiations with Turkish diplomats in asserting the necessity of a Kurdish homeland by painting the matter in absolute terms of obligation without compromise. [19] Despite the drawbacks in his rigid negotiating strategy, he plays an important role at the bargaining table.

Balancing Bolton, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo plays a pivotal role in executing the negotiation strategy. Pompeo, a politician at heart and more willing to work with opponents, tends to look for a strategy to change the nature of a regime, while Bolton seeks to change the regime itself. [20] Secretary Pompeo's interests lie in facilitating a diplomatic arrangement while avoiding war and thinking critically about the long-term strategy. He must play a role in bringing Turkish leaders to

the table through earnest political means. James Mattis, the Secretary of Defense, should also play a role in balancing the hardline hawkish approach to policy discussion that dominates the White House. [21]

In Congress, the Kurdish-American Caucus, led by Rep. Marsha Blackburn (R-TN) and Rep. Jared Polis (D-CO), is likely to support the measure given their support for an independent state of Kurdistan. [22] However, the group most likely to oppose this strategy is the 136-member strong Turkey Caucus, led by Steve Chabot (R-OH), Pete Sessions (R-TX), Stephen Cohen (D-TN), and Gerry Connolly (D-VA), which seeks to strengthen US-Turkey relations and has therefore been quick to condemn Kurdish nationalism. [23] However, lobbying these members of congress by framing the issue in terms of economic gains and increased control of Kurdish nationalism could be effective in winning their support for the agenda.

Donald Trump has had immense agenda-setting power. Just by making the issue a top priority, he has more power to precipitate lasting change than most would give him credit for accomplishing.

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Retaining American Leadership in Southeast Asia by Supporting Digital Capability Development in ASEAN Countries

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In an era of growing Chinese dominance in Southeast Asia, it is vital for the US to not cede its longstanding position of leadership in Southeast Asia to China. Increasing US support for digital capability development in ASEAN countries would offer a counterpoint to China's Digital Silk Road Policy and thus help retain American dominance in the region.

Background

Under the Trump Administration, the United States has reoriented its foreign policy to focus more narrowly on American interests, under the “America First” banner. Throughout the world, the US is ceding its post-WW2 role as the guardian of a US-led world order. In Southeast Asia, the Obama-era “Pivot to Asia” has given way to a palpable retreat in American influence. This is seen in the US’s withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, President Trump’s decision to skip the 2018 ASEAN Summit and the yet-to-be-filled seat for US ambassador to ASEAN.⁶⁷

At the same time, China has emerged as a strategic rival to the US in Southeast Asia. In the economic sphere, China launched the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013— a plan to extend China’s political and economic influence

across Eurasia by investing \$900 billion in infrastructure projects.⁶⁸ One part of the BRI is the Digital Silk Road, a plan to create “a community of common destiny in cyberspace” by helping countries in Eurasia build new fiber optic lines, undersea cables, cloud computing capacity, and even artificial intelligence research centers.⁶⁹ In the military sphere, China is countering American military influence through hawkish territorial claims in the South China Sea. The military and economic spheres are deeply entwined, insofar as China has pressured Cambodia and Laos—takers of Chinese loans—to refrain from opposing its military expansion in the South China Sea.⁷⁰ In this era of rapidly

growing Chinese dominance in Southeast Asia, the US risks ceding its regional influence and leadership to China for good.

However, Southeast Asia remains highly relevant to US economic and strategic interests. ASEAN is the seventh largest economy in the world the US’s fourth largest trading partner, while Southeast Asian countries like Singapore offer bases for American naval forces in the Malacca Straits—a conduit for one-third of the world’s oil shipments.⁷¹ Given these American interests, it is vital for the US to implement policies to deepen its engagement with Southeast Asia.

One key area of policy implementation is digital capability development. Given that Southeast

⁶⁷ McManus, Doyle. “Almost Half the Top Jobs in Trump’s State Department Are Still Empty.” *The Atlantic*, November 4, 2018. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/11/state-department-empty-ambassador-to-australi/574831/>.

⁶⁸ “Embracing the BRI Ecosystem in 2018.” *Deloitte Insights*. Accessed November 15, 2018. <https://www2.deloitte.com/insights/us/en/economy/asia-pacific/china-belt-and-road-initiative.html>.

⁶⁹ “China Talks of Building a ‘Digital Silk Road.’” *The Economist*, May 31, 2018. <https://www.economist.com/china/2018/05/31/china-talks-of-building-a-digital-silk-road>.

⁷⁰ Son, Johanna. “Laos and Cambodia: The China Dance.” *The Myanmar Times*. Accessed November 15, 2018.

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⁷¹ Villar, Lejla, and Mason Hamilton. “The Strait of Malacca, a Key Oil Trade Chokepoint, Links the Indian and Pacific Oceans - Today in Energy - U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA).” Accessed November 15, 2018. <https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=32452>.

Asia still has vast swathes of communities with limited broadband penetration, there are many opportunities for the US to make a significant contribution in the digital space.⁷² Furthermore, supporting digital capability development in ASEAN countries would help the US to counter China's plans to assert its dominance through the Digital Silk Road Policy. In July 2018, the US announced the Digital Connectivity and Cybersecurity Partnership (DCCP)—a \$25-million initiative to “improve [Indo-Pacific] partner countries’ digital connectivity and expand opportunities for U.S. technology exports”.⁷³ The US could shore up this existing policy as a centerpiece of its engagement with Southeast Asia.

Policy Idea

The US must increase its support for digital capability development in ASEAN countries, by raising funding for the DCCP from \$25 million to \$250 million over 5 years. The US should focus on expanding broadband penetration, fostering digital innovation and building digital economies in Southeast Asia.

Policy Analysis

Increasing US support for digital capability development in

ASEAN countries would help stem the recession in American influence in Southeast Asia. Given that Thailand and Laos have already “agreed to cooperate with China in the digital economy to build an interconnected digital Silk Road”, it is crucial for the US to offer a comparable or better digital assistance package.⁷⁴ In September 2018, China announced a plan to invest \$14.6 billion into Digital Silk Road initiatives over five years, with a focus on the digital economy, artificial intelligence, big data, cloud computing and smart cities.⁷⁵ If the US increases its investment in DCCP to \$250 million over five years, it will still fall far short of China's investment quantum. However, given that China's Digital Silk Road spans Eurasia and Africa, while the DCCP targets the Indo-Pacific, a \$250 million investment would still be a significant sum. Furthermore, through responsible financing, public-private partnerships (PPP) and skills transfers, the DCCP could stand in sharp contrast to China's debt-fueled, largely one-sided investments. Given that the BRI has ensnared several countries in a “debt trap”—Sri Lanka ceded control of Hambantota port and Tajikistan gave up 1,158 square kilometers of land to China due to debt—ASEAN countries are more

inclined to receive financing from the US.⁷⁶ If the US can increase its commitment to digital infrastructure-building via DCCP, Myanmar and Malaysia, which have been scaling down BRI projects since 2017, might reject Chinese influence completely in favor of the US. Hence, the proposed policy would be effective in preserving US dominance in Southeast Asia.

Furthermore, an increase in funding for DCCP can lead to mutually beneficial relationships being forged between US and ASEAN countries. In July 2018, the US State Department proclaimed that DCCP can be “good for America, good for business, and good for the world.”⁷⁷ In particular, the US should focus on promoting PPPs between American companies and ASEAN governments. A common type of PPP is the “build-operate-transfer” project, in which an ASEAN government could contract a US business to finance the building and operation of a piece of infrastructure, such as a fiber optic cable, and then transfers the property back to public ownership.⁷⁸ Such partnerships would allow American companies

⁷² “The ASEAN Digital Revolution - Full Report” A.T. Kearney. Accessed November 15, 2018. http://www.southeast-asia.atkearney.com/innovation/asean-innovation/asean-digital-revolution/full-report/-/asset_publisher/VHe1Q1yQRpCb/content/the-asean-digital-revolution/10192.

⁷³ “Advancing a Free and Open Indo-Pacific.” U.S. Department of State. Accessed November 15, 2018. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2018/07/284829.htm>.

⁷⁴ Patrick, Stewart M. . “Belt and Router: China Aims for Tighter Internet Controls with Digital Silk Road.” Council on Foreign Relations. Accessed November 15, 2018. <https://www.cfr.org/blog/belt-and-router-china-aims-tighter-internet-controls-digital-silk-road>.

⁷⁵ Xia, Li. “China to invest multi-billion dollars to develop digital economy.” Accessed November 15, 2018. http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-09/19/c_137478730.htm.

⁷⁶ “BRI Debt Trap: An Unintended Consequence?” The ASEAN Post. Accessed November 15, 2018. <http://theaseanpost.com/article/bri-debt-trap-unintended-consequence>.

⁷⁷ “President Donald J. Trump's Administration Is Advancing a Free and Open Indo-Pacific.” The White House. Accessed November 15, 2018. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/president-donald-j-trumps-administration-advancing-free-open-indo-pacific/>.

⁷⁸ “New Models for Financing Infrastructure in Asia.” Milken Institute. Accessed November 15, 2018. <http://assets1c.milkeninstitute.org/assets/Publication/InnovationLab/PDF/FinancingInfrastructureAsia13Apr.pdf>.

to profit from closing the digital infrastructure gap in ASEAN, especially in the less developed ASEAN countries (Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam). Notably, Vietnam has set up a PPP Office to coordinate PPP projects, and increased investor equity ratios in PPP projects—a sign of its rising appetite for PPPs. Beyond digital infrastructure, the DCCP could foster digital innovation in ASEAN through win-win partnerships between American and local businesses. The establishment of innovation labs, such as the Paypal Innovation Lab and IBM Digital Studios in Singapore, facilitate the exchange of skills and ideas between American and local businesses. This helps deepen US “soft power” as a purveyor of innovative ideas, while also benefiting American businesses by growing their knowledge of the ASEAN market.

The policy of increasing US support for digital capability development in ASEAN is not without challenges. Firstly, DCCP requires the long-term commitment of resources from the US to succeed. As Mike Pompeo noted, the DCCP is a “down payment” on US economic commitment in the Indo-Pacific, and it is likely the first of many down payments.⁷⁹ Given that broadband penetration and digital innovation ecosystems in ASEAN countries will still be a work-in-progress in five years, the US would be obligated to renew funding for DCCP in 2023. This

⁷⁹ “Remarks on ‘America’s Indo-Pacific Economic Vision.’” U.S. Department of State. Accessed November 15, 2018. <http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2018/07/284722.htm>.

may create an expectation among ASEAN countries for the US to commit the same or higher levels of funding every five years, leading to high cumulative costs over the long term. Secondly, weak IP protections in most ASEAN countries may deter US companies from embarking on PPPs with ASEAN governments. Given that Vietnam, Thailand and Indonesia are ranked near the bottom of the IP Index due to rampant software piracy and weak IP laws, US companies may not be willing to bear the risk of sharing skills and technology with these countries.⁸⁰ However, ASEAN’s IPR Action Plan 2016-2015 offers hope that IP protections in ASEAN countries will be improved over time.

On the whole, the policy of increasing US support for ASEAN’s digital capability development is effective and crucial in preserving America’s leadership in Southeast Asia. Despite the significant long-term financial costs and IP risks, the alternative—America ceding its influence over Southeast Asia to China—would be far worse. In order to preserve close strategic and economic ties with Southeast Asia, it is imperative for the US to make a down payment on ASEAN’s digital future.

Next Steps

Business councils and trade advocacy groups ought to support this policy as a means to preserve America’s strategic and economic interests in Southeast Asia. Trade associations, especially the

⁸⁰ Kandiah, Geetha. “How Asean Countries Fare in IP Protection.” Text. The Straits Times, October 15, 2015. <https://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/how-asean-countries-fare-in-ip-protection>.

US-ASEAN Business Council, should inform US government officials of the strides China is making through its Digital Silk Road Policy, and convey the urgency of increasing US funding to DCCP. Trade advocacy groups should spread awareness of the robust business opportunities that lie in closing ASEAN’s digital infrastructure gap, and pressure the State Department to connect US businesses with ASEAN governments. Overall, it is up to business chambers and trade advocacy groups to spread awareness on the importance of supporting digital capability development in ASEAN countries.

Key Facts

- ASEAN is the fourth largest trading partner of the US. In 2015, two-way trade stood at US\$273 billion, with ASEAN running a \$77 billion trade surplus against the US.⁸¹ It is estimated that US exports to ASEAN support 550,000 jobs for American workers.⁸²
- Broadband penetration remains limited in less developed ASEAN countries, with Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar having internet penetration rates of below 50%.⁸³

⁸¹ “Trade & Investment.” US-ASEAN Business Council. Accessed November 15, 2018. <https://www.usasean.org/why-asean/trade-and-investment>.

⁸² Koh, Tommy. “Why Asean Is Good for the US.” Text. The Straits Times, February 6, 2018.

<https://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/why-asean-is-good-for-the-us>.

⁸³ “Digital in Southeast Asia in 2017.” We Are Social. Accessed November 15, 2018.

- China has pledged to invest \$14.6 billion into Digital Silk Road initiatives from 2018-2023.⁸⁴
 - In September 2018, the US government announced a \$25 million investment in the Digital Connectivity and Cybersecurity Partnership (DCCP), in order to “improve partner countries’ digital connectivity and expand opportunities for US technology exports” in the Indo-Pacific.⁸⁵
- step to preserve US strategic and economic interests in Southeast Asia.
- This policy represents a down payment on ASEAN’s digital future, as well as the future of American influence in Southeast Asia.

Action Plan Snapshot

Some of Cornell

University’s faculty, such as Thomas Pepinsky and Andrew Mertha, are among the most renowned in the fields of Southeast Asian Studies and might serve to provide further expertise to us and policymakers. This policy will be presented to Alexander Feldman, President and CEO of the US-ASEAN Business Council. Feldman is head of the leading Southeast Asia-focused business council in the US, and has worked for the US Department of State and Department of Commerce. His position and experience would prove invaluable in convincing the US government officials to increase funding for the DCCP. We must also press for promotion of this policy by contacting the heads of trade advocacy groups, such as Peter Goettler of the Cato Institute and Kent Lassman of the Competitive Enterprise Institute.

Talking Points

- US support for the digital capability development of ASEAN helps preserve America’s position of leadership in Southeast Asia, at a time when America’s influence in the region is being contested heavily by China.
- China’s Digital Silk Road Policy sets aside a far larger quantum for digital infrastructure projects, but ASEAN countries generally prefer US assistance to China’s debt-fueled, one-sided investments.
- Despite the long-term financial costs of the DCCP and IP protection risks, the DCCP remains a necessary

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⁸⁴ Xia, Li. “China to invest multi-billion dollars to develop digital economy.” Accessed November 15, 2018.

http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-09/19/c_137478730.htm.

⁸⁵ “Remarks on ‘America’s Indo-Pacific Economic Vision.’” U.S. Department of State. Accessed November 15, 2018.

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Healthcare Policy

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STD Prevention in the Elderly: Time to Give “The Talk” to Our Parents and Grandparents

By Bella Harnick, ibh9@cornell.edu

The U.S. has the highest sexually-transmitted disease (STD) rate out of the entire industrialized world. An often-forgotten portion of society is the elderly, despite the fact that STD rates among those over the age of 65 have surged—with an increase larger than the rest of the population [15]. Preventative measures that generally are designed for younger populations need to be extended to include seniors, and free condoms should be more readily available for this age group.

Background

Data released from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reveals there to be a 31% increase in total cases of STDs in the U.S. from 2013 to 2017—with a record high of 2.3 million cases of chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis being recorded in 2017 [15]. While the highest incidence rate is among the 15 to 24 age cohort, the largest increase is observed for the elderly. Since 2007, the incidence rate of syphilis and chlamydia amongst the elderly is up by 52 percent and 32 percent, respectively [15]. New medicines being made available to assist with erectile dysfunction have played a role in this surge in STDs. Surveys have found that over 50 percent of men and 40 percent of women are sexually active [7]. But the problem isn't that they are having sex, it's that they aren't having safe sex. The baby boomer generation grew up without proper sex education, and with pregnancy concerns out of the way, many believe there is no need for a condom [1]. A study revealed that men that rely on erectile dysfunction medication are six times less likely to use a condom

during sex, as compared to men in their 20s [6]. Since 2011, STD screenings have been covered by Medicare, but only 5 percent of seniors make use of the free testing provided [3].

Policy Idea

Providing education in elderly communities about the risks of STDs for the elderly and their caregivers is essential. Doctors should play a more influential role in educating their patients about sexual health even as they grow older. In addition, care facility staff should be more adequately trained to handle sexual health-related issues. As staff come in to check on residents, they could include questions regarding the resident's sexual health. It would also be in the best interest of the elderly and retirement communities for pamphlets to be made that directly address the sexual health issues pertinent to the elderly and for condoms to be provided to all residents. Based on the population in the community, retirement communities should be required to have a certain amount of condoms on hand, as seniors may not have the ability to travel to the drug store

to obtain them or may be more prone to embarrassment than younger generations.

Policy Analysis

Increased longevity and the mass-retirement of the baby-boomers has resulted in a large stream of problems, but often forgotten are those pertaining to sex. A 2005 study found that only two versions of the 50 sexual health pamphlets distributed throughout the U.S. adequately addressed sexual relations of the elderly [12]. In addition, a 2013 study found that only 13 percent of long-term care units have trained staff on hand to deal with sexual health behavior [14]. While nursing homes require health assessments prior to moving in, HIV is the only STD that is inquired about. Leading to even more uncertainty about the sexual health of inhabitants, retirement communities don't require health assessments at all [14]. This is in spite of the fact that it is easier for older individuals to become infected with STDs due to their lowered immune system and onset of menopause, resulting in the thinning of vaginal walls [8]. Regular testing for this age group is especially

necessary considering that their age makes it harder for doctors to detect STDs in the first place. This is because symptoms such as worsening eyesight and arthritis are often attributed to aging, rather than STDs [2]. Central Florida and South Florida, which are notorious for their greater prevalence of senior citizens, saw a 71 percent and 60 percent increase in STD cases from 2005 to 2009. Responses to this have been lacking as often times seniors are not thought of when policy makers are crafting policies—largely due to the incorrect assumption about sexual activity among the elderly. The elderly has not been part of over two thirds of STD clinical trials and have been left out of any targeted education efforts [4, 9]. Seniors should be subject to sex education, as they would benefit from learning about how STDs are transmitted, what symptoms are associated with each disease, and how transmission can be prevented. In addition, seniors should be made more aware of the services already provided: Medicare provides free screenings and low-cost treatment in the event that test results are positive [11]. By providing training to staff to discuss these issues, unhealthy sexual practices will be thwarted, which could reduce long-term costs in the future. More research should be done to determine the impact of this education in order to ensure the most effective use of resources. Furthermore, the mere inclusion of free condoms in senior centers and living communities could also help promote a healthy sex life and reduce the STD rate in these communities. Given that using a condom makes having sex 10,000 times safer, it is in the best interest of the senior communities and the

state to provide condoms free of cost. The cost of condoms can be as low as 0.04 per unit, while the cost to society of treating STDs is exponentially larger. For example, the average cost to treat chlamydia totaled \$179 in treatment costs [13]. Healthcare education programs can be provided by retirement communities at a much lower cost by relying on movies, flyers, non-profits, and other resources already out there. However, it would be more beneficial to provide sexual educational programs created with this older age group in mind.

Next Steps

The analysis above provides reason for the implementation of the policy. The proposed policy addresses two main parts of the problem—lack of knowledge amongst the elderly and staff and lack of access to condoms. Physicians should incorporate a patient’s sexual health history into annual visits in order to routinely address the sexual health of their patients in a manner that avoids judgment. The CDC and other organizations such as Safer Sex for Seniors have been working to increase awareness of STDs among the elderly, and they should look to work together in order to generate more resources designed for seniors. While states like New York and Florida have created programs to provide free condoms to residents, both are limited in terms of access. New York State’s (NYSCondom) Program is limited in that it was designed to act as a supplement, meaning that they periodically adjust the size of fulfillments. Currently, supplies are limited to 15 contraceptive methods per order [10]. Florida sees a similar problem in that such programs are

only offered in certain counties. Other states should consider developing similar, yet more extensive programs in order to improve access.

Key Facts

- In 2005, 15 percent of new HIV cases in the U.S. were among those over age 50, according to the CDC [14].
- Forty percent of sexual encounters among college-age Americans use condoms, as compared to about six percent of those 61 and older according to a 2010 National Survey of Sexual Health and Behavior [5].
- A 2013 study found that only 13 percent of long-term care units have trained staff on hand to deal with sexual health behavior [14].
- STD screenings have been covered by Medicare since 2011, but only 5 percent of seniors make use of the free testing provided [3].

Talking Points

- Age can no longer be viewed as protection from STDs given the production and distribution of erectile dysfunction drugs.
- By providing training to staff on the topic of sexual health in the elderly, unhealthy sexual practices will be thwarted, which could reduce long-term costs in the future.
- The mere inclusion of free condoms in senior centers and living communities could help promote a healthy sex life and reduce

the STD rate in elderly communities.

Action Plan Snapshot

The CDC recently hosted a STD Prevention conference in August of 2018. The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) has immense power with its ability to lobby at the state and national level on behalf of older Americans. Efforts should be made on the state level, especially in states with high proportions of senior citizens living in the state. Representatives Barbara Lee and Alcee Hastings introduced a bill to increase access to screening for STDs and would likely be a supporter of these efforts to further reduce the prevalence of STDs amongst the elderly. AARP should also collaborate with the American Sexual Health Association and the American Sexually Transmitted Diseases Association in order to help expand the conversation to include senior citizens as well through creating surveys to determine pre existing knowledge and in which areas improvement is needed. This conference was a step in the right direction by focusing on the complexity of STDs and the multiple populations involved, as indicated by the theme of the conference: "Intersecting Epidemics, integrated solutions." However, most of the resources released from the conference still weren't targeting the older side of the age spectrum. AARP should use

its power in order to pressure state governments and organizations in order to ensure that the elderly is not being forgotten when it comes to sexual health.

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Impairment Inclusivity: Protecting the Right to Vote for Americans with Cognitive Impairments

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Americans with cognitive impairments (henceforth referred to as ACI) are systematically disadvantaged in U.S. civic life as a result of statewide disparities in voting rights. (I) Changing antiquated constitutional language referring to ACIs is a simple and necessary step towards greater electoral inclusivity. Doing so also removes previous ambiguity in characterizing who qualifies as cognitively impaired. (II) If individual states explicitly protect ACIs' right to vote (modeled after, for example, the state of Colorado), it is likely that other states may follow suit, reducing voting rights disparities across the U.S. Thus federal legislative protection, which requires a great deal of coordination and political maneuvering, will not be necessary. (III) Appropriating funds to assist ACI voter registration and ballot submission will further refine a process to increase ACI access to democracy.

Background

By virtue of constitutional amendment, legal recourse, and robust citizen organizing and activity, there have been efforts to increase the accessibility of U.S. democracy to its citizens. Expansion of the electorate is a key feature in six amendments to the U.S. Constitution [10] and numerous landmark pieces of legislation, including the Voting Rights Act of 1965, Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act of 1984, Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and Help America Vote Act of 2002 [12]. Such federal legislation, however, often only addresses aiding individuals with physical disabilities [12]. The CDC considers Alzheimer's disease, dementia, stroke, traumatic brain injury, and developmental disabilities as potential causes of cognitive impairments [19], and estimates well over 16 million individuals

live with some form of cognitive impairment, as of 2016 [19]. Of those ACIs, 12.2 million are eligible to vote [17]; in fact, this likely underestimates the true count given the stigma in identifying oneself as cognitively impaired [14]. Voter turnout among individuals with mental or cognitive impairment in the 2008 elections was considerably lower than overall voter turnout (46.1% and 63.6%, respectively) [15] [16]. States' statutory restrictions on the right to vote for ACIs remains uneven. American federalism allows states substantial power to determine their respective electoral rules, and many state constitutions (including Ohio and Missouri, among others) contain ambiguous and archaic language designating the "insane," "retarded," "lunatics," and "idiots" as ineligible to vote [4] [12] [15]. Thirty-nine states feature some legislation or

constitutional component restricting citizens with cognitive disabilities from voting [3]; often, this manifests itself as revoking voting rights of individuals under guardianship or conservatorship, receiving a judicial determination of incapacity, or requiring individuals to pass a "competency" test [12].

Policy Idea

I propose a two-part legislative effort to remedy these injustices. First, states whose constitution still contains antiquated and offensive language regarding ACIs should update such language or remove it completely. Second, individual states should enact legislation explicitly protecting ACIs right to vote, prevent disenfranchisement based on confinement to an institution for individuals with mental illness, and provide for assistance in

registering and voting in primary elections for ACIs (specifically, modeled after Colorado statutory provisions) [15]. Laws pertaining to guardianship and/or conservatorship as a potential avenue for disenfranchisement should subsequently be repealed, as their categorical bans are unconstitutional.

Policy Analysis

Reducing stigma via statutory language. Numerous psychological studies demonstrate that noun-labeling those with cognitive impairment (e.g., “schizophrenic” versus “individual with schizophrenia”) reduces tolerance and increases perceived stigma [7] [8]. Much of the language characterizing disenfranchisement of ACIs is widely regarded as outdated [4] [11] and often already overridden by existing state laws [12].

Legal and philosophical analysis. The United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD; 2007) provides that states must ‘ensure that persons with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in political and public life on an equal basis with others [...] including the right and opportunity for persons with disabilities to vote and be elected’ (Article 29) [2] [4]. The U.S. signed the CRPD in 2009, but failed to ratify it by just five votes [18], limiting statutory protections for ACIs. In *Doe v. Rowe* (2001), the court addressed a state law that “persons who are ‘under

guardianship for reasons of mental illness’ are prohibited from registering to vote or voting in any election.” The court found that “the denial of the right to vote is a denial of a fundamental liberty” and that the Maine state law violated procedural due process (ACIs were not given notice of their potential disenfranchisement), the Equal Protection Clause, and the ADA [6] [12]. Thus *Doe* (and later, in 2004, *Tennessee v. Lane*) finds unconstitutional categorical bans on the ACI franchise – specifically, those under guardianship, “mentally incompetent,” or “*non compos mentis*” (not sane) [11]. Instead, it found that states must more “narrowly tailor” their voting restrictions to enforce electoral integrity [11].

International Perspective. By 2012, sixteen electoral democracies (including U.S. peer countries such as Canada and the U.K.) featured no restrictions on the right to vote for people with cognitive impairments. In each of these countries, the constitution grants the legislature the ability to determine eligible voters, yet each legislature has not taken advantage of this opportunity [4].

Alleged opportunity for voter fraud. Opponents to lifting voting restrictions for ACIs frequently cite voter fraud as a likely consequence of doing so [19]. Yet among the 5.3 million votes cast in 2016 local U.K. elections, only 260 complaints of voter fraud were investigated

and only two were successfully prosecuted [5] in a country with no franchise restrictions on those with cognitive impairment. Voter fraud in the U.S. is even less likely; a study by Demos found a nationwide average of only eight to nine illegal voters each year [13]. Furthermore, revoking an ACI’s right to vote for the fraudulent actions of his/her caretaker or acquaintance punishes the innocent party, not she/he who commits the fraud [19].

Social costs. Relevant yet unquantifiable is the social cost associated with targeted competency tests and disenfranchisement [2]. Some scholars warn that while universal tests for capacity to vote might reduce targeting of particular citizens, they may resemble long-rejected literacy tests [4]. A number of studies find a weak connection between cognitive diagnosis and ability to cast a vote [1] [4] [9], noting that statutory ACI voting restrictions are *over-exclusive* [4], disenfranchising individuals otherwise capable. There has, however, been little experimental research on a causal tie between relaxing ACI disenfranchisement and increased registration and/or turnout. Doing so, however, first requires voting rights restoration for ACIs.

Next Steps

I stipulate in my thesis that states should model their franchise provisions on the Colorado state constitution, which provides that: 1) those confined to a state institution

for individuals with mental illness retain the right to vote, 2) those receiving evaluation or care for mental illnesses are afforded the opportunity to register and vote in all elections; facilities providing care must assist those individuals in these processes, and 3) those with intellectual and developmental disabilities have the right to vote and are entitled to assistance by agencies to register and submit a ballot.

While a philosophical and judicial analysis suggests it may be worth fully restoring the right to vote for ACIs, there is weaker evidence that doing so would improve the American civic landscape and/or increase ACI voter turnout.

I therefore propose a modified version: Colorado should create a body to study the consequences of its aforementioned statute since its inception. All states whose constitutions contain offensive and/or outdated language should update these provisions. States should explicitly protect the right to vote for citizens with cognitive impairment, including those confined to state institutions or under guardianship/conservatorship. Finally, resources should be allocated to assist those individuals under the care of some agency or facility.

Key Facts

- Well over 16 million U.S. adults live with cognitive impairments [19], and only 46.1% of

individuals with cognitive impairments cast a ballot in 2016 [15].

- Under *Doe v. Rowe (2001)*, state laws categorically banning the right to vote of individuals under guardianship, “mentally incompetent,” or *non compos mentis* were ruled unconstitutional, as they violate key parts of the 14th Amendment and the ADA [6] [11] [12].
- According to studies on Alzheimer’s patients, there is a weak connection between cognitive diagnosis and ability to participate in the electoral process [1] [4] [9].

Talking Points

- Voter fraud is a common concern among those opposed to lifting voting restrictions for ACIs. However, revoking the right to vote punishes not the ACI but the individual who takes advantage of him or her – often a caretaker, family member, or assistant [20].
- Outdated and offensive language still exists in many state constitutions, describing individuals with cognitive impairment as “insane,” “retarded,” and “lunatics.” These terms are often ignored by states and should be

removed from constitutions.

- There is an indefinable social cost associated with certain state laws requiring passing of a “competency test” to vote. Singling out individuals to take a test and/or subjecting them to a special judicial evaluation of competency damages individual dignity [2] [4].

Action Plan Snapshot

Lobby and coalition-building. Because many of these changes require legislative action, it is necessary to build a strong coalition of interest groups to lobby legislators in both the Colorado legislature and legislatures of select participant states. Potential coalition partners to reach out to include (but are not limited to) Disability Rights Advocates, the American Civil Liberties Union (and relevant state chapters), National Disability Rights Network, American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD), Mental Disability Advocacy Center, and Protection and Advocacy for Voter Access (PAVA). *Colorado commission.* Coalition members should first meet privately with formerly sympathetic Colorado state house representatives and senators, urging them to propose the creation of a commission to evaluate statutes related to cognitive impairment and the right to vote in state history, particularly focused on

turnout before and after said statute enactment.

Policy affairs. Members of the coalition should pressure house and senate members in state legislatures, particularly the House Judiciary and Senate Judiciary committees, to bring forward a bill with the desired provisions. Once a bill is brought forward (in consultation with members of the coalition), testimony should be offered before the judiciary committee in its favor.

Communication. A particularly effective testimony may be by an ACI whose right to vote is either in question or recently restored. Public communication should highlight the vote's importance in a functional democracy, and messages should convey that *not* extending the franchise to ACIs is a constitutional violation. Such communication can be done via television ads and/or social media campaigns, in addition to door-to-door canvassing.

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Using Title IX to Ensure Comprehensive Public Health and Rights-Based Sexual Education in Public Schools

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Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in federally funded education programs. Since then, it has been used to help ensure a school's responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to sexual violence. The act mandates faculty of educational institutions to be educated and trained; however, the education requirements should be expanded to fund empirically supported sexual education that is focused on public health and rights based curriculums that is offered to students across all ages of schooling.

Background

The 1972 passing of Title IX opened many doors for women's opportunity by "requiring gender equality for boys and girls in every educational program that receives federal funding" (1). Originally the law was used to help expand athletic programs for women in colleges and public schools. However, the statute has also been used to legally protect students who have been victims of sexual violence and assault in educational institutions (1).

While Title IX has increased protection and public awareness of the role that educational institutions play in preventing sexual violence by requiring faculty to be trained in sexual violence awareness and intervention, the act has not been expanded to require the same education to students of these facilities (2).

A 2011 report from the Office for Civil Rights determined that secondary schools and postsecondary institutions would benefit from additional guidance concerning their obligation to address sexual violence (2); these

recommendations should also be expanded so that students of all ages receive adequate and complete sexual health education concerning legal definitions of consent and acceptable sexual behaviors as well as guarantee student access to resources surrounding the legal and medical repercussions of sexual violence.

Sexual assault and violence are issues of public health due to their incredibly pervasive nature, having long and short-term effects on physical, mental, and reproductive health of its victims. In 1995, sexual abuse was named a "silent-violent epidemic" by the American Medical Association, and the prevention of which was declared a public health priority by the Center for Disease Control and the World Health Assembly. Of the 18% that are victims of rape, 60.4% of female and 69.2% of male victims were first affected before age 18 (2).

Traditionally, measures of action against sexual abuse are focused on responding to abuse after it has been perpetrated—often utilizing the criminal justice system.

Public health focused approaches attempt to enact change by shifting the focus from intervention and treatment to prevention. Due to the large percentage of those affected by sexual violence being under 18 years old, educational settings are key opportunities for targeted prevention methods in order to help victims correctly identify sexual violence and feel more empowered to come forward with their experiences.

Policy Idea

Educational requirements for universities supported by Title IX legislation should be applied and expanded so that the goals of sexual education are "public health" and "rights-based". Public health approaches to these curricula are time-limited, focused and behaviorally oriented, and aims to improve specific risk-related behaviors. The focus of "rights-based" approaches to sexuality education is both broader and deeper. It includes explicit consideration within the curriculum of social and cultural dimensions of

sexuality, such as gender, equity, power and discrimination (7).

Schools should be required to use empirically supported programs that fulfill these two criteria, such as the curriculum designed by Orange County's Rape Crisis Center that addresses both safe sex practices, healthy relationships, and the spectrum of what constitutes consent. The application of these curriculums should be consistently tested and studied on various scales, then implemented at higher state and federal levels. This combination of empirical education and exposure to resources will be a powerful tool in protecting young children from sexual violence.

Policy Analysis

Sexual assault is an enormous problem in the United States with an alarmingly high prevalence among youth and women. According to 2014 research by the Kaiser Family Foundation, one in ten high school students who dated or went out with someone within the previous 12 months reported having experienced dating violence. Young women experience the highest rates of rape and sexual assault among all age groups. More than 1 in 5 college women have been victims of physical abuse, sexual abuse, or threats of physical violence (7). Among women who have ever been raped, 30% were raped when they were between the ages of 11 and 17 years old and 37% were raped between the ages of 18 and 24 years old(4).

The North Carolina Committee for CEDAW/CSW points to male's misunderstanding or disregard for sexual consent as a reason for the continuation of sexual violence, citing studies that recommend

educational components that clarify different behaviors that constitute rape compared to stereotypically scenarios. It is hypothesized that this distinction will attenuate sexual assault (5).

Educational institutions play a key role in providing adolescents with information about safe and consensual sexual practices, as nearly half of teens feel uncomfortable discussing sexual practices with their parents (6). However, school-based education on sexual assault constituted only nine percent of where adolescents received their information on sexual assault in 2015 (5). This educational shortcoming, as it can lead students to have unrealistic expectations of what constitutes rape and result in students being less likely to ascribe stereotypes to victims. Even if sexual education is provided, there are no standards that outlaw ineffective abstinence only based programs, which have been correlated with increased experiences of victimization, pregnancy, and increased drop-out rates for young women (5).

Fortunately, there are empirically supported programs that do exist, which focus on sexual violence protection for various age groups. An example of such programs is the Orange County Rape Crisis Center's curriculum. It consists of multiple classes for different ages: "Safe Touch" for pre-K to fourth grade, "Sexual Bullying" for fifth to eighth grade, "Dating and Healthy Relationships" for high school and college. These programs are also combined with "Start Strong," which promotes bystander intervention and peer prevention (5). This approach is an important curriculum model because it aims to redefine consent based on the

developmental constraints and needs of each age group. It also connects students with the necessary medical and legal resources that are in their community.

The greatest barrier to establishing consent education is the lack of federal oversight concerning school policies on sexual education. Currently, only 22 states require that public schools teach sexual education and 19 states require that sexual education must be medically, factually, or technically accurate. States are also allowed to make laws that restrict minors' access to both sexual education and access to reproductive services (5). There are many public-health related detrimental results of abstinence-only and inadequate sexual education, including higher rates of teen pregnancy, and teen births (8). There are also important social ramifications to consider, studies of schools with "traditional sexual health education" that attempt to restrict certain knowledge were associated with increased homophobic attitudes and increased positive views of overall youth sexuality (9).

This issue falls under equal rights protection legislation of Title IX and supporting young people's rights to healthy lives. The statute can be used to make schools allocate funding to provide adequate consent education and resources. Failing to provide students with information that has been proven to put the physical, mental, and reproductive health of female students at risk. This behavior is discrimination against women, as they are not provided the same guarantee of safety as their male counterparts through these federally funded institutions and programs.

While I recommend this change first be instituted on smaller scales, the framing of the issue under Title IX and children's rights will help when advocating widespread standards to shift methods from intervention to prevention.

Next Steps

I recommend that this policy be implemented on a smaller scale and studied to show its efficacy. A survey should be designed to investigate a student's initial knowledge of ways to prevent pregnancy and STD/STIs, definitions of consent, medical resources available for reproductive health, and legal rights of sexual assault victims. These survey results will help show that the curriculum is effective and allow for modifications to be made depending on any potential shortcomings.

The point of expanding the role of educators in the fight against sexual violence is to support more effective intervention and prevention strategies to help attack the root of issues surrounding sexual assault: lack of knowledge and lack of access to resources. By evaluating how effective these practices would be, we will determine how justified the expansion of Title IX interpretation will be from a public health and social equality standpoint. These findings will help garner support for the policy when it is proposed to become implemented on larger scales because it will directly showcase the value of this approach.

Key Facts

- Of the 18% that are victims of rape, 60.4% of female and 69.2% of male victims

were first affected before age 18 (2).

- Abstinence only programs are not effective, having accurate knowledge about sexual activity and legal definitions of consent leads to more positive outcomes (5).
- Access to and knowledge of specific resources is a key predictor of how willing individuals are to come forward after being victims of sexual violence (5).

Talking Points

- Title IX is a federal legislation that guarantees equal rights for both genders in education, playing a key role in sexual violence and discrimination in educational institutions.
- Interpretations of Title IX should be expanded so that comprehensive sexual education that follows a rights-based and public health approach is implemented in public school systems. This will work to ensure schools are actively taking adequate measures to protect student's health and safety.
- The policy should be implemented and studied on smaller scales in order to measure the effects of increasing knowledge and resource awareness before being implemented on larger scales.
- The change from restricted and non-empirically supported approaches to rights-based and requirement of providing sexual education to students

will help tackle a prevalent public health issue. This will have positive results by improving the mental and physical health of children and teenagers.

Action Plan Snapshot

As described above, research should be conducted to identify the most effective sexual education practices and design curricula for varying age groups based on maturity of the students and applicability of the lessons based on the developmental timeline. Research about most effective resource categories should also be conducted so that local areas can identify what their individual communities require. This information will then be made known and available to students, providing specific training and guidelines to foster communication between school psychologists, medical professionals, and those who will be leading the sexual education courses. After the efficacy of these practices are established, efforts should be made to have school districts implement the approach across more schools. Simultaneously, political outreach efforts targeting coalitions that lobby for women, educational, and civil rights would be key stakeholders in a policy such as this becoming law. Specific organizations that would be interested in funding this research and helping advocate would be Planned Parenthood. Planned Parenthood is an ideal organization to work with due to their large national presence as well as their strong integration into local communities. Additionally, Planned

Parenthood supports many advocacy groups that aim to improve sexual health. One example of a large stakeholder is The National Coalition for Sexual Health. This coalition is made of many organizations, doctors, researchers, and government actors. To further frame this proposal under a problem of civil rights, the National Coalition for Women and Girls in education should be included at later stages due to their strong Title IX expertise and connections.

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Abolish Taxes on Women’s Menstrual Sanitary Products and Increase E-cigarette Taxes In California

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Women’s menstrual sanitary products, such as tampons, are still taxed in the state of California since they are considered “luxury items.” This makes it more difficult, or even impossible, for lower income women to maintain feminine hygiene, as many are forced to choose between food items and cleanliness. Laws that have been previously passed to remove this tax have not been successful. In order to ensure success, lawmakers should consider including charging a higher tax on tobacco in order to compensate for the decreased tax revenue from feminine hygiene products.

Background

In California, \$20 million is generated yearly from the current tax on tampons (Calfas, 2017). The sales tax in California is set at 7.3%—the highest of any state—and is even greater when the average local sales tax is factored in, often adding an additional 1.3% (Sauter, 2018). Since sales tax is a regressive tax, it hits the poorer communities much harder than the more affluent ones. While many items that the government deems “basic needs” are exempt from sales taxes in California, such as many food items, tampons have not been deemed as a necessity (California State Board of Equalization, 2018). Similar bills have been proposed but have not been passed due to Governor Jerry Brown stating that, “tax breaks are the same as new spending—they both cost the general fund money” (Myers, 2017).

Another epidemic that is sweeping the nation is the use of E-cigarettes amongst teens and school-age children. In 2017, only 7.6% of high schoolers reported

smoking cigarettes within the past 30 days, the lowest figure to date, but youth E-cigarette use increased to 11.7% in 2017 in the United States (CDC, 2018). This figure is up to 17.3% amongst high school students in California (Truth Initiative, 2018). Current California legislation puts an excise tax on tobacco products, including E-cigarettes that requires a 65.08% tax on the wholesale value of E-cigarettes (Tax Foundation, 2018).

Policy Idea

The State of California should consider tampons and sanitary pads as basic need items and exempt them from a sales tax. In order to make up for the loss in revenue, estimated at about \$20 million, the excise tax on tobacco products, including E-cigarettes will increase from 65.08% to 65.75% to make up for the loss in revenue. Ideally, this policy will allow low-income women to more easily purchase their necessary sanitary care and will additionally dissuade teens from purchasing tobacco

products since they will now be more expensive.

Policy Analysis

The tampon tax is not a tax on tampons. Rather, it is the normal sales tax that is levied on other items that are subject to sales tax. However, there are many different products, such as Viagra, that have received an exemption from sales tax. This proposal aims to have tampons and sanitary pads qualify for that same exemption, making them more accessible for lower-income women. Taxes are levied for a variety of reasons. Regarding sales tax, the main objective is to raise revenue to redistribute and fund services for the population. However, the tax on tampons only burdens women who are buying these necessary hygiene products. Therefore, the money collected from taxing these items will essentially result in the redistribution of resources from women to men (Ooi, 2018). Women have no choice but to buy tampons in order to continue leading a normal daily life and

contribute to the work force. Critics argue that an exemption to the sales tax must penalize another area due to the loss of revenue (Ooi, 2018). While it's true that eliminating the tax on tampons would cost the California state government \$21.7 million yearly in taxes (Murphy, 2017), on principle alone, it is the right thing to do to eliminate tax on tampons.

Since this reasoning may not be enough to lawmakers who are unaffected by the effects of the tampon tax, the second part of my proposal allows for it to be fiscally plausible. Currently, there is a \$2.87 tax on a pack of 20 cigarettes in California. This means that there is a 65.08% tax on them, which is not the highest tax on tobacco across states. (Tax Foundation, 2018). The revenue acquired from this tax was forecasted to be \$2,091,000,000 for the 2017-2018 year (California Budget, 2018). In some states, like Minnesota, the tax on tobacco products is 95% of the wholesale item (Minnesota Department of Revenue, 2018). Since cigarette use amongst teens has decreased, the new biggest issue is E-cigarettes, like the Juul, Vuse, Blu, MarkTen, etc. Although E-cigarettes were invented with the noble purpose of switching previously-addicted cigarette smokers to a less harmless product, they have started a new epidemic in a new generation (Hartmann-Boyce, 2018). Juuls are flash-drive-sized vaping machines that use flavored pods containing nicotine. Because of their sleekness and commonplace across school campuses, many young adults don't consider the possible unknown dangers of this relatively new product. In 2017, only 7.6% of high schoolers reported smoking cigarettes within

the past 30 days, the lowest figure to date, but youth E-cigarette use increased to 11.7% in 2017 in the United States (CDC, 2018). This figure is up to 17.3% amongst high school students in California (Truth Initiative, 2018). A new increased tax on tobacco products could dissuade teenagers from buying e-cigarettes by making them more expensive. It is necessary to levy this increased tax towards all tobacco products so that addicted adult cigarette smokers are not faced with an even higher tax on E-cigarettes, which would disincentive using e-cigarettes as a method of quitting smoking, when it increased two dollars per package in 2017 (Daniels, 2017). The increased tax on cigarettes in California last year had stores reporting up to a 50% decrease in cigarette purchases after the tax break, which would be beneficial for minors and addicted adults alike (Daniels, 2017).

In order to make up for the \$21.7 million deficit, this revenue would have to be replaced by the tobacco increases. Based on the \$2,091,000 predicted figure for the 2017-2018 fiscal year assuming a 65.08% tax, \$3,212,968,654 worth of tobacco products were taxed. Assuming the same amount of tobacco products sold, the tax would need to be increased by only 1.01%—to 65.75%—in order to take in the additional \$21.7 million and still maintain the revenue achieved last year. This is a reasonable tax increase on an already lofty tax that would support the goal of eliminating the tampon tax and additionally help deter young adults and teenagers from beginning to smoke.

Next Steps

Based on the previous analysis, it is recommended that this policy be implemented immediately. In order to achieve implementation, it would be necessary to convince the California legislature to approve it and get the seal of approval from the governor. Governor Jerry Brown, who has vetoed similar proposals in the past, has reached his term limit and is not allowed to run in the 2018 election. As of now, Democrat candidate Gavin Newsom is predicted to win in the 2018 election (PPIC, 2018). On his campaign website, he lists supporting women in the workforce and has previously declared his support for universal health care (Hart, 2018). Based on these important priorities declared, it is hopeful that he would support a bill that acts to help lower-income women in addition to adding public health value.

Key Facts

- Lower-income women are disadvantaged by a tampon tax, as they may be forced to choose between food and menstrual products.
- \$21.7 million is generated annually by taxes on women's menstrual hygiene products in the state of California.
- The percent of high school students who smoke E-cigarettes has increased to 17.3% in 2017.

Talking Points

- Menstrual hygiene products, which are necessary products to women's health, should not be subject to a sales tax because they are necessary to women's lives

and disproportionately affects women compared to men.

- Lost revenue from the removal of the tampon tax should be replaced with money levied from an increased tobacco product tax.
- By increasing the tax to 65.75%—up from 65.08%—will ensure that there is no difference to the state budget so that other areas do not have to be effected.

Action Plan Snapshot

In order to pass this bill, it will be necessary to get strong public support. Assembly Members Acosta, Cooley, Cunningham, Gomez, Jones-Sawyer, Lackey, Maienschein, Baker, Eggman, Mathis, McCarty, O'Donnell, Steinorth, and Vopel and California Senators Anderson, Wiener, and Glazer co-authored a previously unsuccessful bill. The bill passed the Assembly committee for Revenue and Taxation by 8-1, showing strong support of the bill in the Assembly, but then failed when it could not receive the signature of Governor Brown (California Legislative Information, 2018). With a new governor in office, he may be more receptive to this bill. The aforementioned legislators will likely serve as key supporters and assets during the legislative process.

Outreach on campuses in California may also be an effective measure to draw attention to the issue. Universities, such as the University of California, Berkeley, are known to have a politically active student body, most of whom

who are voters in the state of California, that could get behind the bill and promote it to their student body.

Additionally, public forums could be held in major cities to meet opposition and make any potential improvements so that the bill is more favorable amongst competitors. With public support, voters can call the government to persuade the new governor to sign the bill.

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Keeping E-Cigarettes Out of the Hands of Minors: The Requirement of Prescriptions for Flavoured, Nicotine-Containing E-Cigarette Products

By Lisa Yu, ly325@cornell.edu

E-cigarette usage among minors has reached epidemic proportions in America, and the FDA announced on September 12 that it is taking measures to address the problem. This policy proposal suggests a more effective solution where flavoured, nicotine-containing e-cigarettes require prescriptions to be obtained. This simultaneously keeps these products out of the hands of minors while maintaining access for smokers seeking a therapy to help quit their addiction.

Background

The rise of e-cigarette usage, especially among minors, has been a hot topic in the world of public health. Originally invented as an alternative to regular cigarettes in 2003, e-cigarettes were meant to help smokers quit by slowly reducing the dosage of nicotine over time. Over the past few years, however, the rate of illegal e-cigarette usage among minors has increased exponentially, and one of the main drivers of this increase was the introduction of the JUUL, a smaller and sleeker e-cigarette that is highly appealing to young people^[1]. In 2015, 1 in 6 teens had used e-cigarettes in the past month when surveyed^[2].

To address this issue, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has declared e-cigarette use among minors an epidemic and has coordinated the largest enforcement effort in the agency's history to address this issue. They have already sent warning letters and fines to 1,300

distributors who illegally sold e-cigarettes to minors and have issued an ultimatum towards the top 5 e-cigarette manufacturers in the US: JUUL, Vuse, Blu, MarkTen XL, and Logic. These manufacturers must plan to reduce the use of their products by minors within 60 days of the announcement made on September 12, 2018, or else the FDA will consider banning flavoured e-cigarette products^[3].

Rather than settle for the changes implemented by the e-cigarette companies themselves, or resort to the prohibition of flavoured e-cigarettes, however, an alternative policy proposal is presented to minimize use by minors while continuing to provide e-cigarettes as a therapy for smokers intent on quitting.

Policy Idea

The FDA should require the separation of flavours and nicotine in non-prescription e-cigarette products and require prescriptions for flavoured, nicotine containing e-cigarettes.

Under this policy, adults would only be able to purchase either nicotine-free, flavoured e-liquids, or nicotine containing e-liquids with no flavouring. Flavoured nicotine e-liquids will continue to be available, but only with a prescription from a doctor for smokers wishing to quit.

Policy Analysis

Before analyzing the efficacy of the proposed policy, it is important to first establish the immense harm to minors caused by e-cigarette products. E-cigarettes are not intended for use by minors and there is a substantial risk of young people becoming addicted to nicotine and even transitioning to combustible cigarettes after using e-cigarettes^[4]. Nicotine inhibits the development of the brain up until the age of 25 and is a known carcinogenic compound. It also harms the respiratory, cardiovascular, reproductive and renal systems in the body^[5]. Thus, there is an immediate need for the government to prevent minors from becoming addicted

to nicotine by preventing e-cigarettes from getting in the hands of minors.

To decrease the use of e-cigarettes among minors, the generally agreed upon strategy is to target the most attractive element of e-cigarette usage, the flavours. Flavours are one of the main reasons that children and teens are attracted to e-cigarettes, and it has been shown that 75% of young e-cigarette users would stop vaping if there were no flavours^[1,6]. To build on this preference, it was also found in a blind study that participants far preferred sweetened e-cigarette products over the non-flavoured counterparts, which reinforces the addictive effect of nicotine^[7].

The current FDA mandate calls for either of two scenarios, neither of which will be sufficiently effective. The first possibility is that the e-cigarette manufacturers satisfy the demands of the FDA and take steps to prevent their products from getting in the hands of minors. The current plan outlined on JUUL's website, however, leaves much to be desired. There are few concrete steps outlined besides the investment in independent research and continuing to follow current marketing and distribution guidelines, which have clearly not been effective^[8]. Regulation left to the hands of the manufacturers themselves are unlikely to be effective. If the FDA is dissatisfied with the actions of the e-cigarette producers, the second option is to ban flavoured e-cigarettes to address the central issue. This proposal also has serious drawbacks, as it leaves the

originally intended users of e-cigarettes at a loss. It has been shown that better flavours in nicotine alternatives help smokers reduce cravings and quit smoking in the long-term, so eliminating these flavours would prevent e-cigarettes from helping its intended audience^[9].

The proposed policy would combine the best of both worlds. It will be much more difficult for nicotine-containing, flavoured cigarettes to get in the hands of minors when a prescription is required, and there is significant evidence to suggest that children will stop using e-cigarettes as a result. Should e-liquids with only flavouring fall into the hands of minors, the damage caused will also be immensely minimized. Current smokers will also be able to continue using flavoured e-cigarettes as a therapy to quit smoking.

An additional benefit of the proposed policy is that there will also be significantly less opposition by the e-cigarette manufacturers. This alternative is far more favourable to manufacturers than a complete ban on flavoured products. Rather than imitating the struggle between governments and combustible cigarette companies that occurred decades ago, there is the opportunity with e-cigarettes to work closely with manufacturers for the improvement of public health. E-cigarette companies are founded on the principle of helping smokers quit, and this mission signifies companies should comply with the new regulations. In fact, certain companies already sell

nicotine-free e-liquids, which is the final step of quitting a nicotine addiction^[10].

There may, of course, still be opposition to the proposed policy. In particular, it may be opposed because other cigarette withdrawal products, such as nicotine patches or nicotine gum, do not require prescriptions to obtain. However, the abuse of these products by minors has not been an issue. The use of e-cigarette usage among minors, however, has been declared to reach epidemic proportions and the dangers warrant an exception to the norm. Adopting this policy will also prevent more adults from becoming addicted to nicotine through e-cigarette usage and improve the health of all Americans.

Next Steps

After analyzing the current policy solutions as well as the proposed policy's potential efficacy, the advantages of the proposed policy far outweigh any negative consequences and should be implemented. To aid gathering support for this proposal, further research should be undertaken to empirically estimate the impact of the proposed change. A study identifying the legitimate users of e-cigarettes and finding ways to get the product to these individuals would be particularly valuable.

While implementing this policy, there are several further steps that could be taken to improve the outcome and ensure that children are no longer using e-cigarettes. There must continue to be significant efforts to keep all e-cigarette products out of the

hands of minors, regardless of nicotine content. E-cigarette aerosols themselves are inherently dangerous because of the potential to inhale volatile organic compounds, heavy metals such as lead and tiny particles that reach deep in the lungs ^[11]. The research also suggests that current e-cigarette packaging and marketing is especially appealing to kids. There are even thousands of cases of children drinking e-liquids as they are marketed to look like candy and other food products, clearly indicating a need for action ^[12].

Key Facts

- In 2015, 1 in 6 teens used e-cigarettes in the past month, a rate of usage higher than among adults ^[2]
- Nicotine is as addictive and difficult to give up as heroin ^[13]
- 66.0% of teens surveyed believed that only flavouring is present in their e-cigarettes, and only 13.2% were able to correctly identify that e-cigarettes contain nicotine ^[14]

Talking Points

- E-cigarettes are very harmful towards minors and there are currently unacceptable levels of e-cigarette use among children and youth
- Flavoured e-cigarette products are meant to help current smokers quit by providing an appealing alternative
- The proposed policy aims to keep e-cigarettes out of

the hands of minors while maintaining access for legitimate users and is an improvement upon the options outlined by the FDA

Action Plan Snapshot

The government institutions most likely to enact this policy would be the FDA, which originally mandated the change, and the CDC. The Food and Drug Administration is an agency under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and is responsible for regulating all tobacco products. The Center for Disease Control also runs campaigns to discourage tobacco use and performs research on national trends and opinions on tobacco use. These two organizations must be major partners in order to enact this policy and speaking directly to the sub teams in charge of the tobacco control programs in both organizations would be the most important step. House representatives, senators and local health centers could also be the first point of contact when proposing this idea. Locally, the chair of the Health and Human Services committee in the Tompkins County Legislature is Shawna Black, and an initial proposal may be brought forward at a weekly committee meeting ^[15].

Professional associations such as the AAP (American Association of Physicians) and other tobacco control organizations such as American Cancer Society and the American Lung Society would also be valuable partners.

The final parties to contact in the implementation of this policy are the e-cigarette makers themselves, particularly JUUL as it holds the majority of market share. These companies' missions revolve around helping smokers quit by providing a safer alternative, and thus may be receptive to the proposed guidelines for purchasing flavoured e-cigarettes.

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Reducing the Incidence of Hepatitis C in Prisons and Throughout the United States

By Rachel Armstrong, rea93@cornell.edu

Hepatitis C (HCV) is extremely prevalent within prison populations. Those with the disease are often unaware of their status, and thus not receiving treatment. While testing for HCV is currently not obligatory, making HCV testing on an opt-out rather than opt-in basis will increase the number of diagnoses, allowing for treatment to occur before liver failure or other complications occur. Rhode Island has the smallest prison population where HCV testing is not already on an opt-out basis, making this policy particularly feasible. This change will decrease the prevalence of HCV in communities outside of prisons as well, and will lower the burden of healthcare costs related to HCV.

Background

With 2.2 million people incarcerated in the United States, a shocking 1 in 3 prisoners is infected with Hepatitis C (HCV) [1]. HCV is curable, yet still the deadliest infectious disease in America [2]. In 2014, 102 deaths occurred due to HCV in Rhode Island, and nearly a quarter of a 70% sample of prisoners tested positive for HCV [3]. Without treatment, HCV can lead to liver failure, possibly resulting in death. However, most people who carry HCV are asymptomatic and unaware of their status until liver failure is already greatly underway. This continues the spread of HCV because people will not take extra safety precautions when they do not believe they need to. The spread of HCV throughout the United States is largely propagated by populations who are habitually incarcerated and released.

Standards on Treatment of Prisoners states that “correctional officials should provide for the voluntary medically appropriate testing of all prisoners for

widespread chronic and serious communicable diseases and for appropriate treatment” (23-6.12) [4]. To avoid costs of treatment courses, testing may simply be ignored. At-risk prisoners will often ignore available testing because they are unaware of the potential dangers surrounding HCV, or do not know there is testing available.

Policy Idea

Rhode Island correctional facilities should make HCV testing in prisons on an opt-out basis rather than the current voluntary method. As a result of positive test results, the correctional facilities should work to provide appropriate treatment, housing, and education for the infected prisoners. Providing funds for treatment can be achieved through centralized state-wide purchasing or even through Medicaid provisions.

Policy Analysis

This policy could greatly impact the prevalence of HCV not only within prisons, but

within outside populations as well. Since it is estimated that more than a third of people in the United States infected with HCV pass through correctional facilities annually [5] [6], forming treatment plans in this environment would be particularly effective. Because most people with HCV do not show symptoms until a chronic level of infection occurs, testing is crucial for diagnosis. Participation in any activity increases when it is on an opt-out basis rather than an opt-in basis [7]. This has been previously seen in policies concerning organ donation. Germany, which utilizes an opt-in system for organ donation, has a rate of participation at approximately 12%; in contrast, Austria, which utilizes an opt-in system, has a participation rate of 99% [8]. Similarly, increases in participation rates have been noted for HIV testing with a shift from opt-in to opt-out programs [9]. It is therefore expected that comparable outcomes for opt-out HCV testing in prisons would

occur. More testing would lead to more diagnoses, and under the ruling of *Estelle v. Gamble* (1976), treatment would then have to be provided because failure to do so would be a violation of the eighth amendment [10].

Treatments may come at a relatively large cost, with some drugs totaling 40,000 dollars or more for each treatment course [11]. While this may appear to be a great burden for prisons to provide, it is important to note the alternative to providing treatment; allowing the infection to persist over many years leads to cirrhosis of the liver and ultimately complete liver failure. In 2011, costs associated with liver failure totaled 9.8 billion dollars [12]. It is estimated that approximately a third of these costs are a result of HCV infections, with an average hospital visit cost of \$53,326 [13]. Clearly, it is more beneficial to provide treatment at an earlier stage of infection rather than when liver failure is occurring. The cost-effectiveness of providing early treatment for HCV has been noted previously, [14] [15] [16], further supporting the implementation of this policy. Rhode Island is a particularly important state for implementation because it is the state with the smallest prison population where HCV testing is still on a voluntary basis [17] [18]. This state has already recognized the importance of preventative care, especially regarding HCV, and thus will be more open towards enacting the policy and following through on treatment [3]. Overall, this policy would limit the incidence of HCV

in not only the prison population but also the outside community. Providing testing and treatment has been proven to be more cost-effective than providing care for the later stages of HCV. This policy should be enacted to address this critical public health concern.

Next Steps

While treatment has been proven more cost-effective, high treatment costs could be further avoided. One possible way is the introduction of centralized state purchasing of HCV treatment drugs. Massachusetts already partakes in this method, which allows for greater cost negotiations and ultimately larger price reductions [17]. Another way to circumvent high costs is using U.S. Code Section 1498 of patent law, which could allow the government to avoid pharmaceutical patents, and allow for mass production at lower costs [19]. Medicaid could also be utilized. This would alleviate some of the cost burden for the state. Additionally, it would be more efficient for prisoners who had already been enrolled in Medicaid prior to their incarceration. Also, prisoners could be housed differently, and certain precautions could be set in place to prevent the spread of HCV while awaiting treatment. Education initiatives could be set to teach inmates about HCV, how it is transmitted, and how to best avoid contracting it.

Key Facts

- HCV is curable, yet still the deadliest infectious disease in America [2].

- In 2014, 102 deaths occurred due to HCV in Rhode Island, and nearly a quarter of a 70% sample of prisoners tested positive for HCV [3].
- *Standards on Treatment of Prisoners* states that “correctional officials should provide for the voluntary medically appropriate testing of all prisoners for widespread chronic and serious communicable diseases and for appropriate treatment” (23-6.12) [4]

Talking Points

- Since more than a third of people infected with HCV pass through correctional facilities each year, treatment plans within prisons are particularly effective [5] [6].
- Opt-out methods have been proven to have higher participation rates than opt-in methods [7] [8] [9].
- The cost-effectiveness for treating HCV early in the course of infection has been proven [14] [15] [16].

Action Plan Snapshot

The director of public health of Rhode Island, Nicole Alexander-Scott, should be contacted concerning the implementation of this policy. Ana Novis, the executive director of this department, should also be contacted. Both have been outspoken in working to combat the spread of HCV both within prisons and within the greater Rhode Island communities. Ana

Novis and her team is tasked with analyzing potential legislation and drafting possible policy, thus will be more willing to consider this plan. Workers at the Centers for Disease Control, especially those active in creating campaigns such as *Know More Hepatitis*, could be particularly effective in adding evidence to support the policy's implementation. Spreading the word about how deadly HCV is throughout Rhode Island could gain public support, further pushing legislation to be put in place. Disseminating information on opt-out testing, the health risks of HCV, and the costs of leaving HCV untreated, could all help gain support for this policy.

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Keeping E-Cigarettes Out of the Hands of Minors: The Requirement of Prescriptions for Flavoured, Nicotine-Containing E-Cigarette Products

By Julie Gilbertson, jmg556@cornell.edu

E-cigarette usage among minors has reached epidemic proportions in America, and the FDA announced on September 12 that it is taking measures to address the problem. This policy proposal suggests a more effective solution where flavoured, nicotine-containing e-cigarettes require prescriptions to be obtained. This simultaneously keeps these products out of the hands of minors while maintaining access for smokers seeking a therapy to help quit their addiction.

Background

The rise of e-cigarette usage, especially among minors, has been a hot topic in the world of public health. Originally invented as an alternative to regular cigarettes in 2003, e-cigarettes were meant to help smokers quit by slowly reducing the dosage of nicotine over time. Over the past few years, however, the rate of illegal e-cigarette usage among minors has increased exponentially, and one of the main drivers of this increase was the introduction of the JUUL, a smaller and sleeker e-cigarette that is highly appealing to young people^[1]. In 2015, 1 in 6 teens had used e-cigarettes in the past month when surveyed^[2].

To address this issue, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has declared e-cigarette use among minors an epidemic and has coordinated the largest enforcement effort in the agency's history to address this issue. They have already sent warning letters and fines to 1,300

distributors who illegally sold e-cigarettes to minors and have issued an ultimatum towards the top 5 e-cigarette manufacturers in the US: JUUL, Vuse, Blu, MarkTen XL, and Logic. These manufacturers must plan to reduce the use of their products by minors within 60 days of the announcement made on September 12, 2018, or else the FDA will consider banning flavoured e-cigarette products^[3].

Rather than settle for the changes implemented by the e-cigarette companies themselves, or resort to the prohibition of flavoured e-cigarettes, however, an alternative policy proposal is presented to minimize use by minors while continuing to provide e-cigarettes as a therapy for smokers intent on quitting.

Policy Idea

The FDA should require the separation of flavours and nicotine in non-prescription e-cigarette products and require prescriptions for flavoured, nicotine containing e-cigarettes.

Under this policy, adults would only be able to purchase either nicotine-free, flavoured e-liquids, or nicotine containing e-liquids with no flavouring. Flavoured nicotine e-liquids will continue to be available, but only with a prescription from a doctor for smokers wishing to quit.

Policy Analysis

Before analyzing the efficacy of the proposed policy, it is important to first establish the immense harm to minors caused by e-cigarette products. E-cigarettes are not intended for use by minors and there is a substantial risk of young people becoming addicted to nicotine and even transitioning to combustible cigarettes after using e-cigarettes^[4]. Nicotine inhibits the development of the brain up until the age of 25 and is a known carcinogenic compound. It also harms the respiratory, cardiovascular, reproductive and renal systems in the body^[5]. Thus, there is an immediate need for the government to prevent minors from becoming addicted

to nicotine by preventing e-cigarettes from getting in the hands of minors.

To decrease the use of e-cigarettes among minors, the generally agreed upon strategy is to target the most attractive element of e-cigarette usage, the flavours. Flavours are one of the main reasons that children and teens are attracted to e-cigarettes, and it has been shown that 75% of young e-cigarette users would stop vaping if there were no flavours ^[1,6]. To build on this preference, it was also found in a blind study that participants far preferred sweetened e-cigarette products over the non-flavoured counterparts, which reinforces the addictive effect of nicotine ^[7].

The current FDA mandate calls for either of two scenarios, neither of which will be sufficiently effective. The first possibility is that the e-cigarette manufacturers satisfy the demands of the FDA and take steps to prevent their products from getting in the hands of minors. The current plan outlined on JUUL's website, however, leaves much to be desired. There are few concrete steps outlined besides the investment in independent research and continuing to follow current marketing and distribution guidelines, which have clearly not been effective ^[8]. Regulation left to the hands of the manufacturers themselves are unlikely to be effective. If the FDA is dissatisfied with the actions of the e-cigarette producers, the second option is to ban flavoured e-cigarettes to address the central issue. This proposal also has serious drawbacks, as it leaves the

originally intended users of e-cigarettes at a loss. It has been shown that better flavours in nicotine alternatives help smokers reduce cravings and quit smoking in the long-term, so eliminating these flavours would prevent e-cigarettes from helping its intended audience ^[9].

The proposed policy would combine the best of both worlds. It will be much more difficult for nicotine-containing, flavoured cigarettes to get in the hands of minors when a prescription is required, and there is significant evidence to suggest that children will stop using e-cigarettes as a result. Should e-liquids with only flavouring fall into the hands of minors, the damage caused will also be immensely minimized. Current smokers will also be able to continue using flavoured e-cigarettes as a therapy to quit smoking.

An additional benefit of the proposed policy is that there will also be significantly less opposition by the e-cigarette manufacturers. This alternative is far more favourable to manufacturers than a complete ban on flavoured products. Rather than imitating the struggle between governments and combustible cigarette companies that occurred decades ago, there is the opportunity with e-cigarettes to work closely with manufacturers for the improvement of public health. E-cigarette companies are founded on the principle of helping smokers quit, and this mission signifies companies should comply with the new regulations. In fact, certain companies already sell

nicotine-free e-liquids, which is the final step of quitting a nicotine addiction ^[10].

There may, of course, still be opposition to the proposed policy. In particular, it may be opposed because other cigarette withdrawal products, such as nicotine patches or nicotine gum, do not require prescriptions to obtain. However, the abuse of these products by minors has not been an issue. The use of e-cigarette usage among minors, however, has been declared to reach epidemic proportions and the dangers warrant an exception to the norm. Adopting this policy will also prevent more adults from becoming addicted to nicotine through e-cigarette usage and improve the health of all Americans.

Next Steps

After analyzing the current policy solutions as well as the proposed policy's potential efficacy, the advantages of the proposed policy far outweigh any negative consequences and should be implemented. To aid gathering support for this proposal, further research should be undertaken to empirically estimate the impact of the proposed change. A study identifying the legitimate users of e-cigarettes and finding ways to get the product to these individuals would be particularly valuable.

While implementing this policy, there are several further steps that could be taken to improve the outcome and ensure that children are no longer using e-cigarettes. There must continue to be significant efforts to keep all e-cigarette products out of the

hands of minors, regardless of nicotine content. E-cigarette aerosols themselves are inherently dangerous because of the potential to inhale volatile organic compounds, heavy metals such as lead and tiny particles that reach deep in the lungs ^[11]. The research also suggests that current e-cigarette packaging and marketing is especially appealing to kids. There are even thousands of cases of children drinking e-liquids as they are marketed to look like candy and other food products, clearly indicating a need for action ^[12].

Key Facts

- In 2015, 1 in 6 teens used e-cigarettes in the past month, a rate of usage higher than among adults ^[2]
- Nicotine is as addictive and difficult to give up as heroin ^[13]
- 66.0% of teens surveyed believed that only flavouring is present in their e-cigarettes, and only 13.2% were able to correctly identify that e-cigarettes contain nicotine ^[14]

Talking Points

- E-cigarettes are very harmful towards minors and there are currently unacceptable levels of e-cigarette use among children and youth
- Flavoured e-cigarette products are meant to help current smokers quit by providing an appealing alternative
- The proposed policy aims to keep e-cigarettes out of

the hands of minors while maintaining access for legitimate users and is an improvement upon the options outlined by the FDA

Action Plan Snapshot

The government institutions most likely to enact this policy would be the FDA, which originally mandated the change, and the CDC. The Food and Drug Administration is an agency under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and is responsible for regulating all tobacco products. The Center for Disease Control also runs campaigns to discourage tobacco use and performs research on national trends and opinions on tobacco use. These two organizations must be major partners in order to enact this policy and speaking directly to the sub teams in charge of the tobacco control programs in both organizations would be the most important step. House representatives, senators and local health centers could also be the first point of contact when proposing this idea. Locally, the chair of the Health and Human Services committee in the Tompkins County Legislature is Shawna Black, and an initial proposal may be brought forward at a weekly committee meeting ^[15].

Professional associations such as the AAP (American Association of Physicians) and other tobacco control organizations such as American Cancer Society and the American Lung Society would also be valuable partners.

The final parties to contact in the implementation of this policy are the e-cigarette makers themselves, particularly JUUL as it holds the majority of market share. These companies' missions revolve around helping smokers quit by providing a safer alternative, and thus may be receptive to the proposed guidelines for purchasing flavoured e-cigarettes.

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Banning Conversion Therapy Practices on Minors in New York State

By Jed Kaiser, jhk284@cornell.edu

Conversion therapy describes a range of pseudoscientific practices aimed at changing a person's sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression, though there is consensus among the scientific community that none of the three can be changed [7]. Discredited by almost all medical and psychiatric organizations in the United States, conversion therapy is believed to be, not only unethical, but potentially dangerous to anyone who undergoes it.

Background

The use of conversion therapy practices on LGBT youth have been found to cause both physical and psychological damage, with potential risks including depression and suicide [6]. Due to consensus from the scientific, medical, and psychiatric community about the dangers of conversion therapy, several governmental bodies have attempted to ban conversion therapy. As of January 2019, fifteen states and the District of Columbia have passed legislation prohibiting mental health professionals from practicing conversion therapy on minors [9]. New York State is one of these fifteen, with Governor Andrew Cuomo signing a bill as recent as January 25, 2019 [8]. Furthermore, forty-three localities in Arizona, Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin have passed local conversion therapy bans [9].

Even so, current legislation provides American citizens with little protection from undergoing conversion therapy. Even for states like New York that have passed conversion

therapy bans, these laws specifically prohibit licensed mental health professionals from practicing conversion therapy on minors. These restrictions are often ineffective as licensed mental health professionals are not, and have never been, the exclusive provider of conversion therapy. A significant proportion of those who have undergone conversion therapy were “treated” by clergy members and other spiritual advisors, rather than licensed mental health professionals. For the majority of the states with conversion therapy bans, this means that anyone, including licensed professionals, can practice conversion therapy on minors as long as they do so as clergy or spiritual advisors, rather than as a licensed professional [3].

Policy Idea

I propose an addendum to the Endangering the Welfare of a Child New York State Penal Laws 260.10(1) and 260.10(2) that includes the use of conversion therapy practices on a minor as a violation of child welfare. This policy idea will

allow a ban on conversion therapy to reach across medical, psychiatric, and religious lines in the state.

Policy Analysis

Implementing such legislation would legally define the practice of conversion therapy on minors as Endangering the Welfare of a Child, effectively outlawing any use of conversion therapy practices on minors in New York State. By making conversion therapy practices illegal for minors in all contexts, the ban not only has the potential to virtually eradicate the use of conversion therapy on minors in New York State, but would also leave any person who practices conversion therapy on a minor, whether that be a licensed professional, spiritual advisor, or other, vulnerable to prosecution. By banning conversion therapy for minors in New York State entirely, the significant threat to physical and mental health of LGBT youth due to conversion therapy practices can be entirely prevented. Those who have undergone conversion therapy are at risk of psychological harm in

areas including, but not limited to, depression, suicidality, and self-esteem [4]. According to a study by the American Psychological Association, people who underwent conversion therapy experienced 8.9 times the rates of suicide ideation and 5.9 times the rate of depression [6]. Additionally, LGBT youth who felt highly rejected due to their sexuality or gender identity were eight times more likely to attempt suicide, six times as likely to report high levels of depression, three times more likely to use illegal drugs, and three times more likely to be at high risk for HIV and STDs [2]. The passing of this legislation will protect LGBT youth in New York State from experiencing the substantial pain and suffering that inevitably follows undergoing conversion therapy practices. Passing this specific legislation is the *only* way to fully protect LGBT youth in New York State. The current “state-wide” bans that exists in fifteen states and the District of Columbia, including New York, only ban licensed mental health professionals from practicing conversion therapy on minors [3]. These restrictions are often ineffective as licensed mental health professionals are not, and have never been, the exclusive provider of conversion therapy. Clergy members and spiritual providers are still free to practice, as are licensed mental health professionals if they do so as a spiritual advisor. According to the Williams Institute, an estimated 57,000 youth, ages 13 to 17, will undergo conversion therapy from religious or spiritual advisors before they reach the age of 18 [3]. The only way to fully

protect LGBT youth in New York State is to enact legislation defining conversion therapy practices as a violation of Endangering the Welfare of a Child New York State Penal Laws 260.10(1) and 260.10(2). The most common argument against passing this legislation is by opponents who claim such a law would violate Freedom of Speech. However, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit ruled in *Pickup v. Brown* that banning licensed mental health professionals from practicing conversion therapy on minors serves as “a regulation of professional conduct,” and that “any effect it may have on free speech is purely incidental” [1]. Furthermore, this case established that the state ban “is rationally related to the legitimate government interest of protecting the wellbeing of minors” [1]. The same statutes apply to banning the use of conversion therapy practices on minors entirely. Clergy members and spiritual advisors are not immune to the law. Though Freedom of Speech is still guaranteed by the United States constitution, no one is legally allowed to harm a minor, even if they believe not being able to do so violates their First Amendment right. There is consensus among every major medical and psychiatric organization in the United States that it is not possible to change one’s sexual orientation, with many of those organizations, including the American Psychological Association and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, concluding that conversion therapy practices are “harmful”

[6][5]. As such, the New York State government has a responsibility to pass this legislation to protect its LGBT youth from harm.

Next Steps

The current conversion therapy ban in New York State only applies to licensed mental health professionals, making it insufficient in protecting LGBT youth from suffering the irreparable pain and trauma associated with conversion therapy practices. As such, it is recommended that this policy proposal is instituted in order to prevent the use of conversion therapy practices on minors in its entirety within New York State. The next step would be for stakeholders to lobby members of the New York State Assembly, specifically those who co-sponsored New York State’s current conversion therapy ban passed in January of 2019. Additionally, the Governor of New York, who signed the current conversion therapy ban into law, should be made aware of the ban’s inadequacy and informed of the added benefits of passing this proposal.

Key Facts

- There is consensus among every major medical and psychiatric organization in the United States that it is not possible to change one’s sexual orientation.
- LGBT youth who felt highly rejected due to their sexuality or gender identity were eight times more likely to attempt suicide, six times as likely to report high levels of

depression, three times more likely to use illegal drugs, and three times more likely to be at high risk for HIV and STDs

- People who underwent conversion therapy experienced 8.9 times the rates of suicide ideation and 5.9 times the rate of depression
- An estimated 57,000 youth, ages 13 to 17, will undergo conversion therapy from religious or spiritual advisors (rather than licensed mental health professionals) before they reach the age of 18

Talking Points

- This policy idea will allow a ban on conversion therapy to reach across medical, psychiatric, and religious lines in the state.
- By banning conversion therapy for minors in New York State entirely, the significant threat to physical and mental health of LGBT youth due to conversion therapy practices can be entirely prevented.
- Passing this specific legislation is the *only* way to fully protect LGBT youth in New York State.

Action Plan Snapshot

The proposal should be brought to on-campus organizations, such as Cornell Democrats, Haven, MOSAIC, and OUTReach, that are interested in the advancement of LGBT rights and protections in New York State. Once support for

the proposal is established on campus, members of these organizations can aid in contacting and recruiting LGBT advocacy organizations based in New York State, such as the Human Rights Campaign, Planned Parenthood Federation of America, and the New York Civil Liberties Union, as well as LGBT Resource Centers throughout New York State, for additional support and to establish a team of lobbyists. Once these additional organizations are recruited, stakeholders should lobby members of the New York State Assembly, specifically those who co-sponsored New York State's current conversion therapy ban passed in January of 2019, such as Assemblywoman Ellen Jaffee, Assemblywoman Daniel O'Donnell, Assemblywoman Didi Barrett, and Assemblyman Kenneth Zebrowski. Additionally, Governor Andrew Cuomo, who signed the current conversion therapy ban into law, should be informed of the ban's inadequacy and informed of the need to pass this proposal in order to fully protect the LGBT youth of New York State.

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Returning Choice in Healthcare Back To Patients

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California prisons are sullied by an oppressive co-payment system that lowers the ability of inmates to receive quality healthcare. By abolishing this system and implementing health education programs, both short term goals of improving the general health of inmates and long term goals of lowering rates of recidivism would be met.

Background

Almost one percent of the population, or three million people, are currently serving time in a penitentiary.¹ Inmates typically come from low-income minority groups and display a higher tendency of suffering from chronic illnesses such as mental illness, diabetes, hypertension, and asthma.² With a significant portion of community members tied into the penal system, it is important that these individuals still have access to affordable, quality healthcare as guaranteed through application of the Eighth Amendment.⁴ The ability of inmates to pay for their medication is based on the state's insurance as inmates are unable to reap the benefits of being in the private workforce and are eligible for Medicaid while incarcerated. Furthermore, in light of rising healthcare costs, state policies have begun requiring a copayment from inmates—further burdening an already marginalized population. As a result, many prisoners may not seek the treatment they need and even endanger the well-being of their surrounding community.

Policy Idea

California should abolish the copayment system and instead focus on increasing the quality of

care and preparing inmates for finding medical treatment and insurance after release. This can be accomplished by allocating more of its budget to training employees who would teach inmates about public health and insurance policies through rehabilitation education programs.

Policy Analysis

Proponents of the copayment system argue that it alleviates the exorbitant costs of inmate health care in California, where costs are the most expensive with an annual spending of more than \$2 billion.¹² However, the system is currently costing the state almost \$3 million in net losses. Administration of the program costs around \$3.2 million, but the California Department of Collections only brings in about half a million dollars.^{1,9} Abolishment of the copayment system would not only allow for an increase in the general health of the population but also an increase in the amount of funding that prisons can allocate to other programs.

Abolishment of the copayment system would allow sick inmates to seek out the treatment they need, which in turn would improve the general

health of the prison setting as well as the outside community when the inmates are released. There would also be less of a financial burden imposed on prisoners. The median income of incoming prisoners was less than \$20,000.⁷ This, coupled with the fact that wages in California for non-industry jobs range from \$0.08 to \$0.37 per hour means that prisoners must forego weeks or months worth of wages in order to receive care under the current system.¹¹ Disallowing copayments allows prisoners to focus on paying for subsistence items, such as toiletries and phone calls.¹

The new source of income for the state that would come from disavowing the copayment system could be redistributed to other programs such as staff training, screening procedures, and public health education series. Every inmate should be required to attend an education session on public health and insurance. Money would be allocated to training staff by having them meeting in small groups with professional healthcare providers. Furthermore, more money should be spent in training staff at the beginning of their employment, especially in medical practices. Improving basic procedures such

as appropriate testing and safe sanitation practices would significantly increase the quality of health services, a major problem in California prisons.¹⁰ A number of educational initiatives have also shown to increase general public health.²

Additionally, an increase in budget would allow prisons to screen all incoming men and women under thirty for infectious diseases, such as STDs. All of these potential routes have shown to lower rates of recidivism.⁵ Thus, any form of investment into these new programs would result in a significant return in investment. Decreasing the rate of recidivism is not only favorable for an individual's mental and physical health, but it also allows for current inmates to receive care in a system flawed with delays and lack of resources.

Next Steps

California legislators should be contacted in order to propose a bill to the State Assembly. There must also form an advocacy group composed of healthcare providers, former inmates, affected friends and families, and concerned individuals to spread awareness and pressure the government. Furthermore, the issue should also be taken up with the Judicial Council, which can afterwards bring together stakeholders such as criminal and healthcare representatives, as well as order the immediate implementation of this policy. The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation must also be notified in order to help guide staff training throughout the prison system.

Key Facts

- California spends the most on healthcare per patient out of all the states
- Almost 70% of inmates in California return within three years
- Administration of the copayment system loses a net of almost \$3 million

Talking Points

- Revocation of the copayment system would create a cascade of beneficial effects, including lowering recidivism rates and increasing the budget
- Training staff would lower public health threats and raise prisoners' access to healthcare

Action Plan Snapshot

The public should become more aware of the issues surrounding the intersection between prisons and healthcare. Information should be spread around college campuses in the most populated cities, namely San Diego, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. Once the notion has caught fire, it can then be engaged on a political level. Increased public awareness could push the issue to be featured on the growing trend of social media news.

It is important that this issue does not become partisan, especially as it will receive backlash from insurance agencies. Both Democrats and Republicans must work support this proposal as it benefits the general public. A key individual who should be talked to is J.

Clark Kelso, federal receive in charge of prison health care.

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