



Cornell Roosevelt Institute

ROOSEVELT REVIEW

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Letter from the Senior Policy Chairman

Dear reader,

After a brief hiatus, I am proud to present the eleventh issue of the *Roosevelt Review* by the Cornell University Chapter of the Roosevelt Institute. This review includes seventeen individual proposals researched and produced by our analysts. Roosevelt analysts comprise of a diverse and talented pool of undergraduate students across five colleges: College of Industrial and Labor Relations, College of Arts and Sciences, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, College of Human Ecology, and College of Engineering.

As a nonpartisan think tank, our role in the university is to research, produce, and advocate for progressive policy initiatives in local, university, state, and national government. Our analysts are dedicated to understanding and analyzing pressing social and economic issues, and seeking out pragmatic policy solutions based in research. At our weekly general body meetings, we discuss current politics and policy, host policy panels with university professors and field experts, and plan advocacy projects. We are a platform for emerging thinkers and leaders in politics and social change, and our aim is to engender nuanced discourse about challenging issues.

Beyond stimulating discussion and crafting innovative policy solutions, we are committed to promoting civic engagement among our college peers. Advocacy is one of our defining roles and responsibilities as we engage in issues on the campus, local, and state level. This year we held Cornell Campus' own March for Our Lives rally and marched from our campus to the center of the local Ithaca community, followed up with a student panel that discussed the values behind gun control controversy. In April, our advocacy team traveled to Albany with *Discovery for Justice* to lobby congressmen for fairness in the criminal discovery process through open, early and automatic disclosure of evidence. Additionally, many members of the Roosevelt Institute utilized their background in labor relations and collective bargaining to express their views on and organize against a merger of Cornell's ILR and HumEc Schools.

In this publication, our analysts address complex policy issues with proposals that are practical and innovative. Their solutions are backed by rigorous research, engage political theories, and apply principles of policy analysis. I hope you find their work both informative and thought provoking.

Sincerely,

Emmy Chen
Senior Policy Chairman of the Roosevelt Institute

THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Stephannie Chen '19, *President*

Stephannie is a Junior 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*

Emmy Chen is a sophomore 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.

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Aaron is a junior in the School of Industrial and Labor Relations from New York City. Before serving as Vice President, Aaron spent a year as Communications Director. Aaron is also involved around the Cornell campus as a member of the Tamid Group, a finance and consulting club that works with Israeli startups. Aaron is an avid fan of Cornell's Hockey Team, find him at Lynah Rink.

Nikhil Dhingra '20, *Programming Director*

Nikhil is a sophomore 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 to read and play basketball.

Liel Sterling '21, *Advocacy Director*

Liel is a freshman in the College of Industrial and Labor Relations and a Cornell Meinig Family National Scholar. She is interested in politics and hopes to pursue a career in government. Apart from serving as the Roosevelt Institute's Advocacy Chair, Liel is involved with the Cornell International Affairs Review, the Cornell Public Service Center, and the Tompkins County League of Women's Voters.
Industrial

Samara Jacobson '20, *Communications Director*

Samara is a sophomore 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.

Domestic Policy

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

Directors: Alexandra McCool and Henry Kanengeiser

Analysts: Daniel Bromberg, Lindsey Dahms-Nolan, Samantha Lustig, Jackson Ross-Pilkington, Kiersten Rhodes.

Alexandra McCool '19

Co-Director of the Center for Domestic Policy

Lexi McCool is a junior in the ILR School with a minor in Art History. Her academic interests relate to corporate responsibility, economic sustainability, and income inequality. Specifically, she is interested in how business decisions emanate to influence the market, the “average worker,” and wage distributions within a firm. On campus, she is involved as a student researcher in the Institute for Compensation Studies and as a member of Kappa Kappa Gamma Fraternity. This summer, Lexi will intern as a Corporate Analyst with JP Morgan Chase in their New York City office.

Henry Kanengeiser '18

Co-Director of the Center for Domestic Policy

Henry is a Senior Government major, with minors in Law & Society, Public Policy, and Science & Technology Studies. On campus, he writes for the Cornell Daily Sun and the Cornell Roosevelt Institute. He is currently writing an honors thesis on the relationship between partisan gerrymandering and depressed voter turnout. He hopes to pursue a career in public policy research, political advocacy, or law.

Dan Bromberg

Daniel Bromberg is a sophomore 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.

Lindsey Dahms-Nolan

Lindsey Dahms is a freshman 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.

Samantha Lustig

Samantha Lustig is a freshman in the ILR School. A practicing 2nd degree black belt in Taekwondo, she is also a member of the Cornell Student Assembly's City and Local Affairs Committee. Samantha has previously interned with Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer and New York City Councilwoman Helen Rosenthal. After graduation, Samantha plans to pursue a career in law or government.

Jackson Ross-Pilkington

Jack Ross-Pilkington is an Industrial and Labor Relations major in the class of 2021 with plans to minor in either Economics or Philosophy. In addition to the Roosevelt Institute, he is involved with the College Democrats, the Cornell DREAM team, and the Law and Society Review. Over the summer, he plans to work as an intern with the campaign of Erin Collier for Congress in New York's 19th congressional district. In the future, he intends on attending law school and possibly running for office.

Kiersten Rhodes

Kiersten Rhodes is a sophomore in the College of Arts & Sciences double majoring in History and Government with a minor in French. She is interested in American sociocultural history post-1865, and her policy interests range from urbanist issues to constitutional law and electoral reform. She hopes to attend graduate school after Cornell and work with the Peace Corps before entering a career in government. This summer, she will intern with the New York State Division of Human Rights. Outside of academics, Kiersten plays trombone with the Symphony Orchestra and rows for the Cornell Rowing Club

Economic Policy

Director: Shivani Sanghani

Analysts: Keenan Ashbrook, Abigail Cundiff, Brad DeSanctis, Sydney Eisenberg, Raphael Gendler, Dylan Nezaj, Basirat Owe

Shivani Sanghani, '20

Director of the Center for Economic Policy

Shivani is a sophomore in the College of Arts & Sciences majoring in Economics with minors in Statistics and Crime, Prisons, Education & Justice. She hopes to attend law school in the future and pursue a career in civil rights or public interest law. In addition to Roosevelt, Shivani is also a news writer for The Cornell Daily Sun, a member of The Cornell Engineering World Health project team, and a Knight Institute writing tutor.

Keenan Ashbrook

Keenan Ashbrook is a sophomore Government major in Arts & Sciences with minors in Public Policy and Urban & Regional Studies. His policy interests include the effects of infrastructure and urban policy on socioeconomic outcomes, the politics of trade and globalization, and contemporary American foreign policy in the Middle East and East Asia. He also serves as a Co-Treasurer for the Community Partnership Funding Board and is a Cornell Tradition Fellow.

Abigail Cundiff

Abigail is a freshman in the College of Arts and Sciences. She is majoring in history and economics. In addition to her involvement with the Cornell Roosevelt Institute, she is a member of the Cornell Global Economics and Finance Society and the Phi Alpha Delta Pre-Law Fraternity. She looks forward to interning this summer with the Chicago Securities and Exchange Commission's Division of Enforcement.

Brad DeSanctis

Brad DeSanctis is a Computer Science major in the College of Engineering, class of 2018. In addition to his field of study, he is interested in government and economics, and is completing the Applied Economics minor. After two summers as a software engineer intern for Amazon in Seattle and New York, he will be returning to their New York office full-time after graduation.

Sydney Eisenberg

Sydney Eisenberg is a freshman in the College of Arts & Sciences intending to triple major in French, Economics, and Government with minors in Law & Society and Computer Science. Her primary policy interests include gun control, criminal justice and incarceration reform, taxation, and financial corruption in politics. After college, she hopes to attend law school. In addition to the Roosevelt Institute, Sydney is a Show Committee Chair in the Big Red Marching Band and a brother in the pre-law fraternity Phi Alpha Delta. She is also a staff writer for the Cornell Undergraduate Law and Society Review and an operations analyst for Cornell DEBUT, a biomedical engineering project team.

Raphael Gendler

Raphael Gendler is a freshman studying Industrial and Labor Relations. He is from Minneapolis, Minnesota, and works for The Cornell Daily Sun's sports department.

Dylan Nezaj

Dylan is a member of Cornell University's class of 2021, pursuing majors in Government and Economics and a minor in Public Policy in the college of Arts and Sciences. Outside of the Roosevelt Institute, he is the Vice President of Finances for Pi Lambda Sigma (POLIS), Cornell's pre-government society. He is also a member of Residential Student Congress, the Cornell Democrats and works as a Research Assistant within the Government Department. His current preeminent policy interests pertain to international trade, renewable energies, voting rights, and education and healthcare reform. He aspires to conduct congressional research or work in the State Department and hopes to eventually run for public office.

Basirat Owe

Basirat Owe studies Policy Analysis and Management in the College of Human Ecology at Cornell University; she is pursuing minors in Law and Society, Applied Economics and Management, as well as Human Development. While her policy interests span far and wide, upon graduation in 2021, she hopes to dedicate her career to creating practical and effective policy solutions to national issues concerning poverty, social mobility, and race relations.

Implementing a Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT) Tax in Massachusetts

By Keenan Ashbrook, kta26@cornell.edu

The Massachusetts General Court should repeal the current \$0.24/gallon gas tax and replace it with a vehicle miles travelled (VMT) tax to discourage automobile usage, encourage urban density and transit use, and offset declines in revenue resulting from increased fuel efficiency.

Background

Massachusetts' single largest source of transportation revenue is the gasoline excise tax, which provides the state with about \$800 million per year for the operating budgets of the Department of Transportation (MassDOT), the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA), regional transit services, and debt service on bonds issued for capital projects.^[1] In real terms, the tax per gallon has declined by more than 30 percent since 1993, and revenues are projected to fall by at least a further \$1 billion over the next decade after a voter referendum repealed inflation-indexing in 2014.^[2] Rapid improvements in fuel efficiency and the proliferation of hybrids and electric vehicles also threaten to substantially reduce the gas tax's revenue-generating potential.

Meanwhile, Massachusetts is in the midst of a critical transportation funding shortfall. Estimates suggest MassDOT is facing a 20-year

funding gap of over \$7 billion for road and bridge maintenance alone, while the MBTA faces a \$2.7 billion backlog of unfunded capital projects.^[3] By 2030, costs from congestion, deferred maintenance and poor safety may reach \$25 billion, and the state might suffer economic harm amounting to 16,000 lost jobs.^[4] Continuing to rely on the declining gas tax revenue will only exacerbate the funding shortfall and damage Massachusetts' economic competitiveness.

Policy Idea

The current Massachusetts \$0.24/gallon gas tax should be replaced with a vehicle miles traveled tax. The tax rate per mile should vary for vehicle owners in different municipalities based on average commute distance in order to avoid unfairly penalizing rural drivers. VMT data would be collected by onboard diagnostic systems installed in each vehicle and transmitted to the state revenue agency at the required annual

inspection. Vehicle owners could then elect to pay the VMT tax in one lump sum or in installments over the following year.

Policy Analysis

Switching to a VMT model is a necessity because its revenue generating capacity does not decline as fuel efficiency increases and hybrid/electric cars proliferate. Though VMT per capita have been decreasing recently in Massachusetts by 1-2 percent per year,^[5] average fuel efficiency is increasing by at least 2% per year,^[6] and the electric car stock is increasing by about 30% per year.^[7] A 2016 study found that levying a \$0.05/mile tax on Massachusetts interstate highways alone would generate 80% of all current gas tax revenue,^[8] a number that would be even higher if all VMT were included.

Collecting VMT data via onboard diagnostic systems and transmitting it to the state at yearly vehicle inspections is the best way to implement a VMT from a cost-

benefit perspective. A 2012 study found that this approach entails low implementation costs relative to revenue generated.^[8] Whereas approaches such as GPS monitoring of vehicle movement or “pay-at-the-pump” data collection require installing and operating location-monitoring devices in cars or outfitting gas pumps with devices to collect VMT data, annual vehicle inspections are performed by maintenance garages that already have the diagnostic equipment to collect VMT data from vehicles’ onboard computers. This approach is also the easiest for motorists, since they are required to receive an annual inspection anyway and will not need to take extra steps to comply with the tax.

Once the data is sent to the state, motorists can be charged a per-mile tax rate that varies based on the municipality where they reside in order to create equity between urban and rural areas. The VMT tax should decrease proportionally to the average distance motorists need to drive to get to jobs, education, or commercial areas so that motorists are not penalized simply for living in areas with less population density. This has not been attempted in either of the two most prominent VMT pilot programs (Oregon and California), but Massachusetts has detailed data on average vehicle miles traveled in every municipality,^[9] so enough information exists to vary the tax rate locally.

Apart from revenue-generation, VMT taxes are socially

beneficial because they serve as a Pigovian tax, reducing the negative externalities associated with traffic congestion.^[10] Taxing VMT also provides incentives for commuters to switch to public transportation and live in more dense urban areas with shorter commute distances, which is desirable because urban density is correlated with better health outcomes,^[11] as well as increased social mobility.^[12] An Oregon pilot program also found that VMT is less regressive than a gas tax.^[13]

Next Steps

Main institution: Massachusetts General Court (state legislature). The General Court must repeal the gas tax law and replace it with a VMT. Legislators with a strong interest in transit, transportation, and urban policy will be good allies in advancing reform legislation.

Key Facts

- MassDOT is facing a 20-year funding gap of over \$7 billion for road and bridge maintenance.
- In real terms, the gas tax per gallon has declined by more than 30% since 1993.
- Implementing a VMT on Massachusetts’ interstate highway system alone would generate \$5.5 billion over ten years.^[14]

Talking Points

- Failure to invest in Massachusetts’ transportation networks will result in

decaying transit systems and ever-worsening traffic and safety conditions on highways, damaging the state’s economic growth and quality of life.

- Inflation and increasing fuel efficiency mean the state gas tax will not be able to provide sufficient revenue to meet Massachusetts’ transportation funding needs.
- Implementing a VMT tax will ensure transportation revenue stability while also discouraging car use and encouraging density and transit use.
- To ensure equity between urban and rural areas, the per-mile tax rate can be adjusted based on location to control for higher average VMT in rural municipalities.

Action Plan Snapshot

Allies/Targets:

Policy Organizations/Advocacy Groups: Massachusetts Institute for a New Commonwealth (MassINC), Gateway Cities Initiative, Harvard Kennedy School Rappaport Center, Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center, Transportation for Massachusetts, A Better City, Transit Matters Massachusetts

These organizations are interested in state transportation policy, and can provide crucial expertise and advocacy.

State Transportation Officials: Officials with the Massachusetts

Department of Transportation and Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority are acutely aware of their revenue challenges and will be helpful advocates for VMT as a more sustainable revenue stream. These officials also need to be consulted on the best way to implement a VMT tax collection process.

Municipal Officials: Officials from rural municipalities in particular will need to be persuaded that a VMT will not adversely impact their residents.

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Alter the Endowment Tax to Encourage Social Mobility

By Abigail Cundiff, amc453@cornell.edu

The endowment tax should not apply to donations made out for student financial aid or scholarship programs to prevent reduction of spending on low income students. This will encourage social mobility in American universities.

Background

As part of the recently approved 2017 tax act, a 1.4 percent endowment tax will now apply to universities whose endowments exceed \$500,000 per student and whose enrollment exceeds 500 students.^[1] The tax would affect 35 schools, and raise \$200 million.^[2] The number of universities affected by the tax is expected to increase in the following years as endowments grow with time. Universities have been tax exempt due to the public benefits provided by education.^[3] Donor contributions allow universities to amass huge endowments to fund things like financial aid, improved facilities, and research grants. The average spending rate of endowments is generally 4-5 percent of the endowment value per year since endowment assets must be preserved,^[4] making the 1.4% tax more significant than it may otherwise appear. Some donors contribute to a general fund for the university, which can then be used at its discretion, however, most

donors specify the terms and uses of their contribution to the university.^[5] Since only a limited amount of funding can actually be allocated towards student financial aid per year, the current tax would impact the number of students who could receive such aid, which would affect the lives of many low income students.

Policy Idea

The endowment tax should be reformed so that universities are able to maintain funding for student financial aid to increase social mobility in the nation through education. Since the endowments universities receive are usually specific to what donors want the money to be spent on and cannot easily be reallocated, the 1.4% endowment tax, as it stands, affects all areas of the endowment—including student financial aid and scholarships. Donations made with the purpose of supporting student financial aid should be exempt from the tax, which will prevent donor discouragement in areas that are

fundamental to lowering costs of higher education. The thresholds of the original tax act will still apply but the money will specifically be used exclusively for federal student aid programs.

Policy Analysis

The endowment tax, as it currently stands, would be detrimental to financial aid programs in many universities. The endowment tax would cut into student financial aid and schools would likely admit students who can pay full tuition, thus continuing a cycle of wealth at many of America's top universities. Due to potential donor discouragement, the tax would reduce the number of donations in general since smaller donations would merely go towards paying the tax. The amount of the endowment used per year that is spent on financial aid varies greatly across different universities affected by the tax. On average during 2010-2013, schools like Yale and Harvard, used around 15 percent of their endowment spending on

student financial aid, which is about 200 million dollars per year.^[6] Some schools with large endowments, like Pomona and Wellesley use 40 percent of their endowments on students^[7] and should not have to cut into this funding for the purpose of a tax of whose allocation of the money remains unclear. At these four schools, less than 20% of the student enrollment receives Pell Grants^[8], a percentage similar to other schools affected by the tax. Should all aspects of endowments be taxed, low income students would suffer since millions of dollars would be cut from spending on financial aid and the schools will ultimately become bastions of wealth and privilege.

If all parts of the endowments are eventually taxed, donors could be less inclined to make donations to their universities. If donations made out for purposes directly related to spending on student financial aid and scholarships remain tax exempt, then donors would be encouraged to make charitable contributions towards these sort of pro-mobility programs. This also prevents schools from reallocating funds for low income students to other projects due to strict regulations on some donations. While these elite universities with large endowments may cut back on construction and be more selective with their research grants as a result of the tax, student financial aid will not be at risk. Universities will find ways to allocate their money toward what they find most important for their

institution's success. The social benefit derived from this exemption justifies its existence since it encourages social mobility in some of the most elite institutions of higher learning. Additionally, the money, \$200 million, collected from the tax on other parts of the endowment can fund federal student aid programs like grants, loans, or work study. In 2014-2015, two-thirds of full-time students were on federal student aid and 57% of them received grants.^[9] Grants are more helpful to the average college student and an increase in funding would allow more grants to be given out as opposed to loans^[10]. An increase in funding would also make it possible to extend aid to an even greater number of students.

Next Steps

There has already been much contention regarding the issue of endowment tax and many universities have rallied around its repeal. Many have touched upon the threat the tax poses to students, among other things. To alleviate the universities' concern, a bi-partisan bill introduced by house representatives John Delaney (D-MD) and Bradley Byrne (R-AL) has been proposed for the repeal of the tax.^[11] While it is important to maintain endowments, the plan I propose is a compromise and ultimately benefits the students and promotes mobility in American universities since the tax money will go towards federal financial aid. Instead of repealing the act, section 4968 of the 2017 tax act should be amended to include an

exemption on donations that require the school to allocate the funding towards student financial aid or scholarship programs.

Action Plan Snapshot

I found my proposal to be effective in promoting pro-mobility standards in American universities since it focuses on putting money into financial aid programs. I would ask students and professors to stand in support of upholding equality and opportunity in higher education and for them to continue their criticism of the current legislation. My proposal is fairly moderate in terms of change and will likely not garner as much support as efforts to entirely repeal the legislation. In that case, I suggest that people work towards the full repeal of the endowment tax since no tax is better than a tax that would remove funding from student financial aid programs from universities.

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Fighting Economic Inequality Through Labor Market Reform

By Brad DeSanctis, bgd32@cornell.edu

American corporations take advantage of labor-market agreements — legal or otherwise — to reduce competition and suppress wages, contributing to high levels of inequality found in the United States. To support American workers, the Federal government should take a number of steps to address this inequality, including banning non-compete clauses for low-paid workers, aggressively targeting illegal anti-poaching agreements, and blocking corporate mergers that harm labor-market competition. These policies would create freer labor markets and result in increased wage growth for low-paid workers who need a raise the most.

Background

The United States and the rest of the world have reached historic levels of inequality. While the top 1 percent of income earners globally captures 27 percent of the income, the bottom 50 percent captures only 12 percent.^[1] The United States, however, stands out among other developed nations for particularly high levels of inequality. Among OECD nations, the United States has the fifth highest Gini coefficient, a statistical measure of inequality based on disparities in a country's income distribution.^[2] This is in large part due to the very slow wage growth of working-class Americans. Over the last 40 years, the average pre-tax income of the bottom 50 percent of American earners has stagnated at around \$16,000, increasing only 2.6 percent over that time period. The top 10 percent of earners, on the other hand, saw their pre-tax incomes grow by 231 percent.^[3]

Corresponding with this growth in inequality has been the reduction of labor-market competition, which is associated with large declines in wages.^[4,5] Employer tactics such as non-compete clauses, which have roughly tripled since 2000, reduce labor-market competition and drive down wages.^[6] Policy measures that target labor-market competitiveness will be effective at boosting wage growth for working-class people and reducing inequality.

Policy Idea

Congress should pass a law targeting uncompetitive labor-market practices. It should ban non-compete clauses for workers earning less than the median wage of their state and bar enforcement for employees who are laid off. The policy must affirm that no-poaching agreements are illegal, including within franchises, and direct the Justice Department to aggressively target companies that violate this

law with criminal charges. Finally, the law should amend the Justice Department guidelines on mergers and antitrust violations. These rules should include reductions to labor-market competition. If a merger newly qualifies as uncompetitive, the Justice Department should prevent it.

Policy Analysis

The proposed policy has three different components, each aimed at reducing the ability of American corporations to stifle labor-market competition and suppress wage growth, particularly among the working class. The first component to this policy is to ban non-compete clauses for workers earning less than the median wage in their state and bar their enforcement for employees who are laid off. The Treasury Department has specifically warned about how the reduction of worker bargaining power from non-compete clauses

can lead to lower wages. In addition to harming workers themselves, non-compete clauses can harm the overall economy by pushing workers out of their fields of expertise and by generally reducing the job churn that creates a more efficient matching between employees and firms, both of which affect productivity.^[7]

Researchers have found non-compete clauses to be associated with a 3.8 percentage point higher wage premium for changing jobs, and that 20 percent of employees under non-compete clauses were afraid they would be fired if they tried to negotiate the agreement.^[8]

18 percent of all American workers are covered by non-compete clauses, of which 15 percent are without four-year degrees, and 14 percent are earning less than \$40,000 annually. Other research has found that 23 percent of workers with no more than a high school diploma and 21 percent of workers earning below median income have been bound by non-compete clauses at some point in their careers.^[9] The stated reason for non-compete clauses is to protect companies' trade secrets from being stolen by competitors. However, the large numbers of Americans bound by these agreements who are less educated and low-earning casts doubt on whether non-competes are truly necessary or simply being used as an anti-competitive measure. Both workers with less than a four-year degree and workers earning less than \$40,000 have been found to be half as likely to possess trade

secrets.^[10] Thus, non-competes among low-earning workers are an unnecessary protection from the theft of trade secrets while still retaining the harmful effect of reducing labor-market competition.

The second component of this policy is to affirm that no-poaching agreements are illegal, including within franchises, and direct the Justice Department to aggressively target companies that violate this law with criminal charges. 56 percent of major franchisors have no-poaching agreements in their franchise contracts. This is an increase from one-third of franchisors 20 years ago. These agreements increase franchise companies' monopsony power over workers and therefore reduces labor-market competition.^[11] The Justice Department has threatened to criminally investigate no-poaching agreements between companies in the past.^[12] The Justice Department should follow through on these threats and include franchises among their targets.

Lastly, this policy should amend the Justice Department guidelines on mergers and antitrust violations to include reductions to labor-market competition and direct the Justice Department to block such mergers. The Justice Department and the Federal Trade Commission already review mergers between corporations to ensure there will not be anticompetitive effects on product markets. They should conduct the same review for labor markets, and block mergers that will result in

drastic reductions to labor-force competition. Research shows that moving from the 25th percentile to the 75th percentile of labor market concentration is associated with a 15 percent to 25 percent decline in wages.^[13] Retaining competition among companies for workers is necessary for wage growth. Competition forces companies to outbid each other on wages to meet their labor demand, and therefore should be a consideration for blocking mergers.

Each component of this policy is geared towards increasing labor-market competition. Research has repeatedly shown that labor-market monopsony power has led to wage stagnation.^[14] Other researchers have found that wages have not grown faster in sectors with rising job openings, indicating an uncompetitive market dynamic.^[15] Analysis comparing states such as California that bar enforcement of non-compete clauses with other states have found additional harmful effects on innovation, entrepreneurship, and employment.^[16] By stopping unfair labor-market practices that are creating an uncompetitive labor market tilted in favor of corporations, the Federal government will boost wage growth among working-class Americans and help alleviate America's rising inequality.

Next Steps

Congress should implement this policy. Unions and other political groups supportive of the working-class should lobby

members of Congress to pass such a bill. Congress should work with the Justice Department and the FTC to ascertain the best way to reword guidelines governing mergers, and to ensure that enough resources are allocated to accommodate the increased responsibility these agencies will have. If funding is necessary to hire more investigators, then the funds should be added to the policy. However, they are not strictly necessary. Proponents of the policy should make the case that it would reduce restrictions on the free market — a conservative priority — and fight inequality — a liberal priority — all without requiring a dollar of Federal spending.

Key Facts

- Over the past 40 years, the average pre-tax earnings of the bottom 50 percent of American earners has increased only 2.6 percent in real dollars.^[17]
- Anti-competitive non-compete clauses and trade-secret lawsuits have roughly tripled since the year 2000.^[18]
- 18 percent of all American workers are covered by non-compete clauses, and this includes 15 percent of workers with no more than a high school diploma and 14 percent of workers earning less than \$40,000.^[19]
- 56 percent of major franchise corporations forbid franchisees from competing with one another in the labor market.^[20]

Talking Points

- Non-compete clauses, non-poaching agreements, and mergers are ways corporations game the labor market to suppress working-class wages and should be targeted.
- This policy would boost working-class wages without spending Federal dollars nor directly harming employment or economic growth.
- This policy reflects free-market ideals by addressing the uncompetitive labor market while also fighting economic inequality.

Action Plan Snapshot

The first step towards implementation of this policy should be to reach out to the School of Industrial and Labor Relations and the Cornell Institute for Public Affairs. Both schools contain researchers interested in labor market policy and promoting wage growth, and who would strong allies to work with to support the policy and improve on its components. State government officials from states such as California that have implemented some of the policy's components at the state level should be reached out to for further support and advice. Rep. Tom Reed, the local Congressman, should be contacted and lobbied to support the initiative.

Proponents of the policy should aim for a broad coalition to support the bill. Most Democrats will be supportive of the measures, but fewer Republicans, given that it will eventually be costly to

businesses. A coalition between Democrats and free-market conservatives, who might be willing to act to fix uncompetitive labor markets, will be feasible and necessary.

Short of passage of this policy, the FTC and the Justice Department can be lobbied separately to step up their enforcement of antitrust laws, specifically when it comes to non-poaching agreements. While franchise companies using non-poaching agreements among themselves have been ignored by the Federal government, this hands-off attitude could be changed without legislation.

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Make America Great Again: Creating jobs and stimulating economic growth through investments in infrastructure

By Basirat Owe, bao29@cornell.edu

In response to unsatisfactory infrastructure and the national unemployment rate, President Trump has created a plan to invest \$200 billion of federal funds in infrastructure^[4]. Of this value, only \$90 billion will be used to directly fund or expand infrastructure^[4]. That said, the President's investment plan will not be very effective in creating jobs or economic growth because of its lack of substantial concrete funding.

Background

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) gave U.S public infrastructure a “poor” rating in 2017^[2]. That year, the funding gaps in roads, airports, rail, sewage, levees and dams, among other categories of infrastructure ranged from \$3 billion to \$1.1 trillion^[1]. In 2013, the cost to improve this rating by 2020 was estimated to be \$3.6 trillion^[13]. Additionally, the lack of satisfactory infrastructure is projected to amount to “\$3.9 trillion in losses to the U.S. GDP, \$7 trillion in lost business sales, and 2.5 million lost American jobs in 2025”^[6].

That said, it is clear that infrastructure affects us all; it is a nation-wide issue. So, why has it fallen through the cracks? As of 2014, local and state infrastructure spending as a share of the GDP was just below 2% -- a 30 year all time low^[11]. Additionally, the amount of

federal infrastructure spending has been decreasing since 1987 from its high of \$174 billion to \$118 billion in 1998^[10]. Now, a decade later and pressured by recuperating unemployment rates, we are obsessed with creating jobs.

Unemployment was a major topic in the 2016 presidential race, and it, arguably, resulted in the election of President Donald Trump. Both parties' candidates advocated for an increase in infrastructure spending, which would imply that it has bipartisan support^[7]. However, in February 2018, when President Trump released a \$1.5 trillion infrastructure plan -- with only \$200 billion of federal funds and the rest financed by state and local governments as well as the private sector -- he was met with Democratic opposition^[4]. For example, Congressman Peter DeFazio on the House Transportation Committee found

that President Trump's plan lacked real investment and funding sources, and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi noted that the costs of infrastructure investments would shift heavily to states and cities^[8]^[12].

So, while it is undeniable that investments in infrastructure will create jobs and stimulate economic growth, how and how much we choose to fund them are crucial components to consider before implementing such a large-scale policy.

Policy Idea

President Donald Trump's American Infrastructure Initiative uses \$200 billion of federal funds to stimulate a \$1.5 billion investment in infrastructure^[4]. A dissection of the federal funds shows a direct \$90 billion investment in the creation and maintenance of infrastructure: \$20 billion to fund new innovative

projects that improve infrastructure, \$20 billion to expand existing financing programs, and \$50 billion explicitly investing in rural infrastructure^[4]. The majority of the federal funds, \$100 billion, will be directed towards an Incentives Program to encourage additional funding from the states and the private sector -- predicted to be \$1.5 trillion^[4]. Finally, the last \$10 billion of federal funds is meant to reduce inefficient leasing of federal property^[4].

Policy Analysis

Infrastructure has always been a balancing act between federal and state governments, so it is no surprise that a large part of Trump's infrastructure investment seeks additional funding from state and local governments^[4]. The proposed \$100 billion Incentives Program is mostly composed of capped matching grants -- federal aid grants tied to a particular spending category whose value is proportional to state and local government spending in that category^[14]. This program is meant to incentivize state and local spending and part of the projected \$1.5 trillion investment depends on it as well, so it is important to analyze states' previous responses to federal funding.

It is known that once states receive federal funds, they can shift their budgets to fit their own fiscal priorities^[14]. This means that they do not necessarily have to meet federal funds dollar for dollar, it could be more than \$1 or less than that^[14]. As can be expected, most

studies show that total state and local infrastructure expenditure increases by less than \$1 for every \$1 in federal aid^[14]. One study by the University of Pennsylvania on the net change to infrastructure spending by federal, state, and local governments under the White House Infrastructure Plan estimated low, medium, and high spending change scenarios. In the low, medium, and high spending scenarios they assumed that total spending would increase by \$0, 50 cents and \$1 dollar respectively^[14]. Their results showed that in the low spending scenario there would be a \$20 billion net increase, while the high spending scenario would result in a \$230 billion net increase^[14]. The results are fall short of \$1.5 trillion because the type of grants awarded to states under Trump's plan do not change or subsidize the cost of infrastructure after they are depleted; additionally, states can apply the new funding to existing projects which would not be a new investment Trump is aiming for^[14]. On the one hand, matching grants could incentivize states to direct more of their budget to infrastructure so that the federal government will match their expenditures; however, since the federal grant is capped, this would theoretically only work until that cap was reached. That said, if it were best case scenario and states matched federal funding \$1 for \$1, total government infrastructure funding would be \$320 billion^[14]. With this in mind, the private sector would have to invest around \$1.2 trillion in infrastructure to get to the

original \$1.5 trillion investment. All in all, the predicted \$1.5 trillion investment is both overly idealistic and grossly impractical given the way states have responded to federal funding in the past.

In terms of growth, a study on the short and long-term effects of infrastructure investment found that a debt-financed \$250 billion annual investment for seven years would increase overall employment by 3 million net new jobs and boost the GDP by \$400 billion by the end of the first year^[3]. The study also predicted that the jobs created would be disproportionately filled with young Latino males without a four-year college education. However, the president is not using \$250 billion of federal funds, so smaller returns should be expected.

To begin, President Trump's plan to invest \$1.5 trillion in infrastructure was only half of what the ASCE recommended five years ago. Further, of those funds, only \$200 billion were federal dollars^[14]. Then, to be specific, only \$90 billion was allocated to the development and improvement of infrastructure with \$100 billion to incentivize additional state funding^[14]. Unless there is a \$1.2 trillion investment from the private sector, then the President's goal of \$1.5 trillion in infrastructure will go unmet. That said, since the federal funding falls below what is needed to properly improve infrastructure, the predicted job and economic growth from doing so will also not become realized. In the end, the relatively small proposed federal investment in unsatisfactory

infrastructure will be an ineffective policy in creating job and economic growth.

Next Steps

President Trump should not follow through with this infrastructure plan largely because states will most likely not provide the additional funding he seeks. His administration should consider changing the types of grants they award states or uncapping the matching grants to better incentivize investments^[14]. This way, the additional cost of every unit of infrastructure will be subsidized and states would not be disincentivized from investing more in regard to federal funds^[14]. This would, of course, raise the national deficit, so part of the necessary revenue for this plan or any other could be raised through user fees or taxes. For example, the ASCE recommended raising the gas tax through the Highway Trust Fund -- which funded the expanded highway program and established highway related taxes^{[9][13]}. In terms of political implementation, since Republicans currently hold the Congress and White House, there are no legislative or administrative blocks to this plan if Congress approves it. However, Trump recently said that his plan will have to wait until after midterm elections this year, which are expected to result in a Democratic Congress^[5].

Key Facts

- The funding gaps in roads, airports, rail, sewage, levees

and dams, among other categories of infrastructure ranged from \$3 billion to \$1.1 trillion in 2017; the total funding gap totaled \$2.064 trillion that year.^[1]

- The American Society of Civil Engineers estimated \$3.9 trillion in losses to the U.S. GDP, \$7 trillion in lost business sales, and 2.5 million lost American jobs in 2025 resulting from poor infrastructure.^[6]
- The average family will lose \$3,400 in disposable income each year, or about \$9 a day, due to poor infrastructure.^[6]

Talking Points

- President Trump's American Infrastructure Initiative has a direct \$90 billion investment in infrastructure and a \$100 incentives program that is expected to yield an overall \$1.5 trillion infrastructure investment.^[4]
- While most studies show total state and local infrastructure expenditure increases by less than \$1 for every \$1 given in federal aid, the best case scenario of a \$1 to \$1 return only yields a \$230 billion net increase in infrastructure expenditure according to a University of Pennsylvania study.^[14]
- That said, the predicted \$1.5 trillion investment is both idealistic and impractical given the way states have responded to federal funding in the past.

- Additionally, since the plan's investments fall short of the ASCE recommended amounts, the returns on the investment will not be as large as hoped for.

Action Plan Snapshot

- Host a university-wide public forum with civil engineering, economic, and policy analysis professors on the topic
- Encourage students to lobby local House and Senate representatives in conjunction with the American Society of Civil Engineers.
- Partner with Clean Water Action and other environmental action groups to produce a media campaign on the nation's substandard infrastructure.
- In Michigan, create a partnership with the city council in urban and rural areas with especially bad roads to put pressure on local, state, and federal agencies.

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The Debate Over Gun Control: How the United States Can Reduce Gun Violence While Protecting the 2nd Amendment

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Gun violence and mass shootings are nothing short of an epidemic in the United States — American gun violence rates vastly exceed those of other countries. It should not have to be this way. The federal government should enact legislation to ban the sale or possession of automatic weapons and other military-grade firearms, and should introduce a gun buy-back program in an effort to reduce the number of firearms in circulation.

Background

Australia

Mass shootings seem to be numbingly ubiquitous in the United States, but though they are not unparalleled in their carnage, they are unparalleled in the western world in terms of frequency and lack of political response.

Following the 1996 Port Arthur Massacre in Tasmania, in which 35 were killed and another 38 wounded, the Australian government instituted the National Firearms Agreement, or NFA. This policy set up a firearm registry, required a 28-day waiting period for background checks, and set up a buyback system to compensate owners of newly-banned automatic and semiautomatic rifles and pump-action shotguns. Although the efficacy of this program has been heavily disputed since its initiation, we argue that this program contributed to the significant drop

in both firearm-related homicides and suicides in Australia since Port Arthur.

Former British colonies on frontier continents, Australia and the United States share a history of higher rates of gun-ownership. Life in colonial Australia was characterized by “rugged-individualism,” so firearms, used for both hunting and protection for decades, became synonymous with this outdoor lifestyle.

That being said, the question as to whether the government even possessed the authority to regulate firearms was never questioned in Australia to the extent that it has become in the U.S. No equivalent to the American Second Amendment exists in Australia, and indeed firearms have been regulated since European settlement. One might be surprised to hear that the United States also had similar leeway in its restrictions of firearms since before

the nation’s inception. Before declaring independence, many colonies had restrictions on guns, such as bans of sales to Natives, restricted hunting hours. Eventually, in the 1920s, restrictions on “machine guns” were commonplace.

United States

In the late 18th century, the Second Amendment was added to the Constitution through the original Bill of Rights. This amendment reads, “A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.” Back in 1791, the founding fathers were afraid of a military coup by a malevolent standing army, be it foreign or domestic. Therefore, in addition to creating a national army, civilians were expected to own firearms in the event that they would need to form a militia to fight

against a military coup. Today, personal firearms are no match for any sort of military coup, but many Americans still fight for what they call an unrestricted right to bear arms.

Beginning in the twentieth century, as gun technology began to evolve exponentially, the federal government started implementing various laws to limit gun ownership, particularly regarding types of weapons that individuals can purchase. The first of these laws was the National Firearms Act, passed in 1934. The NFA imposed a tax on the manufacture and purchase of firearms and also required registration of many types of firearms (see endnotes for more details). However, the 1968 Supreme Court Case *Haynes v. United States* rendered the 1934 version of the NFA essentially unenforceable. The second law was the Gun Control Act of 1968, passed after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, which amended the NFA to include stricter licensing procedures, more rigidly defined firearm offenses, and prohibition of firearms sales to felons. The third law was the Firearm Owners' Protection Act of 1986, which outlawed the "transfer and possession" of machine guns. The fourth law was the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act of 1993, passed after the assassination attempt on then-President Ronald Reagan which instead seriously injured White House press secretary James Brady. The Brady Law imposed a system of background checks and waiting

periods to obtain firearms. Although specific time-frames are dictated at the state level, the law mandates that all states must have some kind of background check and waiting period for unlicensed individuals wishing to purchase firearms. The most recent law pertaining to gun control was the NICS Improvement Act of 2008, which implemented measures to improve the National Instant Criminal Background Check System.

However, despite these restrictions, many people can still obtain guns legally without going through these background checks and waiting periods. In what is commonly regarded as the "Gunshow Loophole," certain vendors, specifically those at gun shows, are not required to have a license to sell firearms. This license is called an FFL, an abbreviation for Federal Firearms License. However, individuals selling from their private collections are not required to have an FFL certification. Therefore, vendors at gun shows are not required to have buyers undergo background checks or waiting periods of any kind. This loophole creates an additional problem in restricting what types of firearms are sold and to whom.

Another historical component of gun culture in the United States is the large gun lobby. The primary organization that defends the "right to bear arms" is the National Rifle Association, also known as the NRA. The NRA abides the motto "...the right to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed," doing anything in their

power to enforce the unrestricted right to own guns. The NRA cites their primary purpose as firearms education, and they do provide a tremendous amount of educational resources about gun safety and responsible gun ownership. However, today, the NRA has become a major political force, using its financial power to help fund political campaigns. Therefore, fearing that the NRA will withdraw financial support, many politicians avoid legislation that would be unfavorable to the NRA. Although many other lobbying organizations try to influence the decisions of Congress, none are quite so powerful and wealthy as the NRA. Furthermore, the NRA often supports firearms-dependent resolutions to gun violence, such as arming teachers in high schools.

Compared to other developed countries, the United States has the highest rate of gun violence. On average, nearly 100 Americans are killed, whether by homicide or suicide, every day. Of these people, nearly 10% are children or teenagers. This rate of violence amounts to almost 13,000 gun homicides every year. Per 100,000 residents, there are about 3.61 gun homicides, which is over 3.0 more deaths than the next highest gun homicide rates (0.5 in Canada, 0.48 in Portugal, and 0.35 in Ireland). Rates of homicide do not encompass all acts of gun violence; for every one person killed, two more are injured. Additionally, over 60% of gun deaths in the U.S. are suicides, amounting to more than 20,000

suicides by self-inflicted gunshot (and nearly 4,000 others survive such attempts). Furthermore, despite the loopholes at gun shows, background checks have helped block over 3 million gun sales. However, it is estimated that about 40% of guns sold in the United States today are sold without a sufficient background check.

Policy Idea

The federal government should implement a civilian ban on assault firearms (i.e. automatic rifles) and any such firearm or accessory that may, with certain modifications, enable an otherwise civilian weapon to operate at the same capability as one classified as military-grade (i.e. semi-automatic rifles, bump stocks, etc.). Alongside this ban, the federal government should negotiate with gun manufacturers to slow down automatic and semi-automatic weapons production as well as reduce ammunition production, eventually ensuring that sales of such dangerous firearms are limited to military markets only. Following the implementation of this ban, the federal government should create a short-term firearms buy-back program. During this brief amnesty period, individuals in possession of illegal firearms would be able to sell their weapons to the government in exchange for a stipend and exemption from criminal charges. The purchased firearms would be converted to military use or would be completely repurposed for their materials.

Policy Analysis

Australia

The Australian National Firearm Agreement, or NFA, consists of several components. Most famously, it entailed a nationwide ban on automatic and semiautomatic rifles as well as pump shotguns, in addition to creating a temporary buy-back of as many as 20 percent of all firearms. In addition, the NFA established a more stringent licensing system, including: (1) the potential gun owner must provide a legitimate reason for owning a firearm other than self-defense be provided; (2) new mandate to undergo a 28-day waiting period and background check for all firearm purchases, and; (3) creation of a nationwide firearm registry.

The results of these efforts appear to be mixed, but, upon closer inspection, the program seems to have reduced both firearm-related suicides and homicides (which were not substituted significantly by other methods such as hanging or stabbing, respectively). In addition, the fact that this policy eliminated mass shootings is often touted.

Throughout the two decades prior to the 1996 massacre, there had been 13 shootings in Australia in which four or more people were killed. However, since then, there has not been a single one.

Two prominent studies that refute the effectiveness of the program are often cited by critics of the NFA. One posits that the apparent decline in firearm-related homicides after 1997 was the continuation of a long-lasting trend

and that the NFA's effect on this trend cannot be determined. The other study asserts that an attempt to prove a statistically significant effect of the NFA on firearms-related homicides and suicides failed, leading to the conclusion that the NFA had no significant impact on the reduction of gun deaths. It is important to acknowledge that the first study, in spite of statistical bias, does not refute the incontrovertible effect that this legislation has had on suicide rates in Australia. In fact, the study confirms it. Furthermore, a study published by Harvard University undermines both of these studies. For the first, the Harvard-based study revealed that the authors were pro-gun lobbyists, removing their authority to objectively report conclusions on the data. For the second, the Harvard study claimed that the data was faulty and therefore rendered the conclusions invalid. The faulty study started its analysis in the year 1979, even though firearm-related homicide and suicide statistics exist all the way back to 1915. The year 1979 happened to be the year with the highest rate of firearm suicide and the third-highest rate of firearm-related homicide, so the true impact of the NFA was masked by an outlier in the overall dataset.

By extending the same methods but applying them to the entire dataset reaching back to 1915, the Harvard study concluded that the NFA did, in fact, decrease gun deaths. The invalid study used an inaccurate linear trend, which would have required that gun death

rates be less than 0 per 100,000 people in 2004 in order to report any significant effect. The Harvard study also refutes the validity of the second study on the basis that the analytical methods used are only appropriate when the effect is immediately apparent (i.e. followed by no lag while converting policy to implementation). As the Harvard-based study concluded, the NFA experienced some lag in yielding results, but after some time, clearly led to a reduction in gun deaths. That being said, there was undeniably a decrease in firearm-related homicides in the years prior to the NFA, but the first study would have you think that this was a longer-lasting trend. There are no studies that we know of that explain why there was a decline beforehand. It is very possible that it was just a statistical anomaly or due to some exogenous trend; we postulate that the relatively strict reforms that took place in the second-most populous state of Victoria in those years played no small part. In any case, even if there was a significant downward trend prior to the NFA, the years after the buyback saw an acceleration in the decline of firearm-related homicides.

The greatest criticism of the NFA is that the buyback itself was not effective. However, we can see that the rates of death by firearm strictly correlated to the firearms that were confiscated. For example, if the only three guns that existed were pistols, rifles, and shotguns, and more rifles were confiscated than any other type of gun, then

there would be a greater decrease in rifle deaths than deaths by any other type of gun. This is precisely what was observed in Australia; deaths by the the most heavily confiscated gun types decreased the most. This effect is even clearer for suicides than homicides because the guns bought back were also the most common types of guns used in suicides. Furthermore, deaths by firearm decreased the most in states where the most firearms per capita were bought back. Firearm suicide rates also declined by 80% nationwide. The net suicide rate decreased by a factor corresponding to the decrease in gun suicides, indicating that easy access to guns enabled more people to commit suicide.

It is almost universally understood that the passage of such wide-sweeping reform in the United States would be very difficult. Though Australia and the United States share a common colonial, frontier heritage of “rugged-individualism” marked by relatively high gun-ownership rates, the United States remains a global outlier among other comparable countries. Furthermore, guns in the United States have a cultural importance unparalleled in Australia or virtually anywhere else. This gun culture is perpetuated by supporters of the “right to bear arms” expressed in Second Amendment to the Constitution. Furthermore, the NRA has effectively countered all far less stringent measures thus far. Another aspect that contributed to the success of the NFA was the

irreplaceability of the guns that were sold back. Due to the Australia being an island nation, the country would have to import most of their firearms. Therefore, the government was more easily able to track and restrict imports of illegal firearms. Cost-Benefit Analysis in the United States

With Australia as a precedent for successful gun control without eliminating the private right to own guns, we believe that a similar act could potentially work in the United States. In Australia, the NFA clearly reduced suicide by self-inflicted gunshot wound. Since over 60% of gun deaths in the U.S. are suicides, a gun control and buy-back system could potentially significantly reduce the number of gun suicides, and maybe even suicides in general. Furthermore, in Australia, the amount of gun violence by type of gun was considerably reduced for the types of guns emphasized in the buy-back program. If the United States could successfully implement a buy-back particularly pertaining to automatic and semi-automatic rifles, we would also potentially see a drop in shootings committed with military-grade rifles (which have been used in many recent school shootings and other mass shootings).

In Australia, prior to the NFA, civilians possessed approximately 3.5 million firearms. After the implementation of their gun buy-back program, civilians sold over 600,000 prohibited firearms and about 60,000 non-prohibited firearms to the government. The program incurred

a total cost of \$500 million, which included the buy-back campaign as well as spending on educational resources and other administrative costs. In order to subsidize this spending, the Australian government raised taxes for government-sponsored healthcare by a mere 0.2%. This small increase in taxes covered the entire \$500 million budget.

Extrapolated to the United States, such a program would cost substantially more. According to various academic studies, there are approximately 265 million guns in the United States, which means that the U.S. has over 75 times more guns than Australia did prior to the NFA. Therefore, if the estimated cost per gun were the same as in Australia, a gun buy-back program would incur a government debt of about \$37.5 billion. Since the United States population is only about 13 times greater than that of Australia, the overall increase in taxes would have to be increased by a factor of approximately 5.85 in order to compensate for the gun-to-population ratio. However, this would only end up increasing a tax (whether it be Medicare, income, or Social Security) by about 0.10%. Per person, this fee is nominal, and the benefits of a gun buy-back program, in terms of safety and domestic security, would most likely be significantly greater than the financial costs of such a minimal increase in taxes. A firearms buy-back program could also potentially be subsidized by re-allocating other government funds. However, if the budget were to be

reworked to incorporate this program, more research would need to be conducted to determine which sectors should receive reduced funding.

Affected Population, Feasibility, and Scope Limitations

Ideally, this policy affects the entirety of the United States population. Its scope is theoretically national and the policy would be most effective if carried out such that the ban applies to the whole country. However, the feasibility of the proposed policy is questionable for two main reasons. First, although Americans overwhelmingly support gun violence prevention measures, supporters of the unrestricted right to bear arms will challenge the constitutionality of an assault weapons ban. The constitutionality of such a policy is questionable and has not been determined by U.S. courts. Secondly, and more obstructively, the Republican Party is highly unlikely to allow any gun control measure nearly as stringent as ours to be enacted. Enacting the policy will almost certainly require Democratic control of both Houses of Congress and the Presidency.

Next Steps

The Democratic Party should consider making gun violence prevention one of its primary platform points and policy goals heading into the 2018 midterm elections. Organizations and political committees that support reasonable gun control legislation should begin researching specific strategies on how to

efficiently and effectively carry out a gun buy-back program in communities and nationally. U.S. citizens in support of gun control measures should prepare for a tense political battle that is sure to come with the suggestion to vastly reinterpret the Second Amendment.

Key Facts

- The United States accounts less than 5% of the world's population — but has suffered 30% of its mass shootings
- An average of 96 Americans are killed with guns per day
- There are nearly 13,000 gun homicides per year in the United States
- 62% of U.S. firearm deaths are suicides

Talking Points

- In the first 3 months of 2018 alone, there have been nearly 20 reported incidents of school shootings in the United States, in which at least 31 people have been killed and 52 have been injured
- We believe that this policy is an optimal way to compromise between those who want to completely outlaw guns and those who believe in nearly unrestricted gun ownership
- We are only putting restrictions on military-grade weapons that are not even intended for civilian use; we are only outlawing guns that are designed to kill people en masse

Action Plan Snapshot

The greatest challenge in carrying out our policy idea would be reconciling the partisan perspectives on gun control laws. The Democrat desire for reform is quite polarized from the Republican belief in gun ownership that is strongly supported by a large gun lobby. Although we would likely have the support of victims of gun violence and their families as well as many others, we need to garner the support of a larger population of people. For this reason, the most valuable and currently overlooked demographic to which we can appeal is gun owners. Many responsible gun owners are actually pro-gun control, and with a plan that clearly outlines how gun owners will not lose their “right to bear arms,” we could potentially earn their much-needed support. This challenge facing our proposal comes from the longstanding culture of gun ownership in the United States. In Australia, where there was not much of a precedent for gun ownership, the government was successfully able to implement a gun control policy limiting gun ownership. However, in the U.S., since so many people believe that the Second Amendment grants the unrestricted right to bear arms, the vocal minority of the gun lobby and its allies use their financial leverage to impede any progress in Congress. Therefore, we must focus our efforts on responsible gun owners who genuinely want to see change rather than continuing to fight against those who are so strongly in favor of unlimited gun ownership.

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Education Policy

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

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Ahyoung is a junior majoring in Environmental and Sustainability Sciences with an Applied Economics minor in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. Ahyoung is excited to examine the intersections between business, policy, and environmental management. She spent the summer of 2017 in Washington, D.C., conducting research as an intern for the World Wildlife Fund's U.S. Governmental Relations Department. She also worked as a Roosevelt Fellow, building support for her policy idea to clean up the city's watershed. Ahyoung is looking forward to being back in the D.C. area this summer while working as a research analyst for CEB, Now Gartner.

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Jenny is a sophomore in the College of Arts and Sciences majoring in English and minoring in Environmental and Sustainability Sciences. In addition to Roosevelt, she is involved in Climate Justice Cornell, the Student Assembly Environmental Committee, and she is the President of the Cornell International Affairs Review. Her interests include environmental justice and climate and energy policy, both of which she is excited to explore through her internship this summer as an Atkinson Climate and Energy Intern with the Environmental Defense Fund.

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Aleksa is a senior Economics and Statistical Science double major in the College of Arts and Sciences. Outside of Cornell Roosevelt Institute, he has also loved his experiences with the Cornell Economics Society and the Swing Dance Club, serving on the E-board for both. His goal is to apply what he has learned in his classes and as a researcher in the Health Design Innovations Lab to a role in data science once he finishes his MPS in Applied Statistics at Cornell this coming Fall.

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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.

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Julia is a sophomore in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. She is a communication major and minoring in business. Outside of the Roosevelt Institute, Julia is a member of the Society of Women in Business, the Cornell Marketing Organization, Slope Media and is VP: Communication for her sorority. She joined the Roosevelt Institute in 2017.

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Elizabeth is a freshman majoring in Environmental and Sustainability Sciences in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. She plans to concentrate in environmental policy and governance. Her main policy interests include environmental conservation and environmental justice. This summer, she will work as an intern at Environment America, working to defend public lands, clean water, and clean air through policy and advocacy. On campus, she is also a recovery officer for the Food Recovery Network and teaches canoeing courses for Cornell Outdoor Education

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Lang Ming is a math major student in the Cornell University College of Arts and Sciences class of 2021. Dedicated to advancing public discourse, she is also an active member of the Cornell Speech and Debate Society, where she competes at national and international tournaments with the Worlds debate team and helps organizing various public speaking events on campus. As a former intern at Reed College, Lang worked with the Reed Research Reactor where she gained firsthand experience with nuclear reactor operations and the regulations of nuclear reactors in America. In the future, Lang wants to apply her knowledge in the STEM field to research on science and environmental policies.

Curbing Pollution with Car Free Zones

By Aleksa Basara, ab2295@cornell.edu

City planners must create car free zones to reduce air pollution from transportation, therefore discouraging use of private vehicles and increase reliance on public transportation.

Background

Since 1990, US transportation sector greenhouse gas emissions have been increasing in part due to an increased demand for travel. Currently, private vehicles alone make up 12% of total US CO₂ emissions, equally about 790 million metric tons of CO₂, making the transportation sector the second largest contributor of greenhouse gas emissions in America ^[1]. Such pollution contributes to global warming through several mechanisms, perhaps most recognizably by trapping heat in the atmosphere and raising global temperatures. The effects could not only devastate humanity in the future, but also present an immediate threat to the estimated 150 million Americans who live in areas that do not meet federal air quality standards ^[2]. Increased exposure to poor air quality is associated with asthma, increased medical costs, and an estimated 30,000 deaths in the US and 3,000,000 worldwide ^[2].

The creation of car-free zones has become an increasingly

popular solution in cities worldwide that are trying to encourage more public transit use such as buses, an alternative that produces about 33% fewer greenhouse gas emissions per passenger mile than cars ^[3]. The city of Madrid has planned to restrict 500 acres of downtown roads to residents of the area and impose a fine of \$115 on anyone that parks in one of the 13 parking lots located in this area ^[4]. There could be significant pushback from business owners that fear closing roads to private vehicles may cripple business. However, city officials in Oslo, Norway have demonstrated it is possible to incorporate such concerns into policy proposals. Their plan originally included a complete road ban on private vehicles, but local businesses expressed they would lose clientele who can commute to the center solely by car. City officials altered the plan to build 35 miles of bike lanes, simply remove on-street parking to reduce car usage rather than banning cars, and thus minimize costs to businesses

while working toward their abatement goals ^[5].

Policy Idea

Car free zones should be implemented in every US city with an existing public transportation system, especially cities with an unhealthy amount of CO₂ and particulate matter in the air. Removing street side parking and requiring a permit to park in designated parking lots would make it considerably less attractive to travel to an area with a private vehicle and encourage greater use of the public transit system. Furthermore, enacting strict fines for violators could enforce the policies and help finance any reconstruction projects to make the roads more bike and public transit friendly. If US cities were to model Italian cities, for example, one could expect to pay about \$80 for such a fine ^[6]. As cars would not be completely banned, inventory deliveries could still be dropped off to allow for the businesses to continue functioning with minimal disruption.

Policy Analysis

The local government of Madrid, a city with over 6 million inhabitants in the metropolitan area, seeks to reduce daily private vehicle use by 6%^[7]. Madrid leaders predict this will increase demand by 130,000 journeys, which they plan to accommodate via public transit and bike lanes, for example^[7]. There is strong evidence that this will not divert traffic into other parts of the city, however. A team of researchers at University College London found that throughout 60 worldwide cases of road closure or reduced access, an average of 20% of the traffic that was displaced evaporated and did not manifest in another part of the city. Some cities saw as much as 60% of the traffic evaporate^[8], with Pecs, Hungary reducing traffic by 80% in some parts of the city center^[9]. When cities block roads for one reason or another, car users find other more environmentally sustainable modes of transit or have eliminated unnecessary travel altogether.

In addition to reducing traffic, there is high probability that creating a car free zone would also lead to a significant reduction in pollution. The greatest benefit of the Madrid plan is the 20% reduction of CO₂ and particulate matter level, another unhealthy byproduct of fuel exhaust^[10]. Through various funding schemes, including some EU programs to promote sustainability, Madrid has allocated a budget of over \$600

million to create 30km of bicycle routes, purchase 268 new buses, and add over 20 new stations throughout the city to accommodate for the increased demand in alternative methods^[11].

In the US, many cities such as Dallas and New Orleans have similar pollution levels, but have not implemented plans nearly as substantial as the one in Madrid. Even in St. Louis, a city with one of America's highest particulate matter levels and double that of Madrid, plans for improving air quality don't extend beyond adding a few miles of bike lanes and increasing the number mixed use developments^[12]. Few places in the United States call for creating car free zones as a means of promoting public transportation use, despite demonstrated success in many parts of Europe. The decision of US city officials to implement milder plans directly contradicts the 2004 National Survey on Communities in which 61% of respondents indicated they wished to live in smart growth communities and were willing to pay a premium^[13]. The findings of this survey indicated Americans want to rely less on cars to travel, largely due to inadequate public transit or lack of bike lanes.

While the price tag of such a plan seems unjustifiably high initially, a closer look reveals that outdoor air pollution from transportation is associated with an estimated \$130-250

billion a year in damages, primarily via preventable deaths^[14]. Taking a more drastic step such as implementing variations of car free zones will not only decrease the US carbon footprint, but also save lives and potentially billions of dollars. In America, a car free zone that eliminates street side parking or requires a permit to drive in certain areas would likely be passed. Environmentalists would see the reduction in pollution and businesses owners would be unlikely to see a dip in their profits. On the contrary, businesses could see profits increase by virtue of being located in a more pedestrian friendly area.

Next Steps

All US cities with an Air Quality Index with an Unhealthy rating should adopt this policy. For the implementation to be feasible, state and federal governments must be prepared to finance some of the costs if a city's plan reduces the pollution down to acceptable levels within a scientifically derived timeframe. Educating the public about the issue and then lobbying city level officials are crucial first steps to signal to higher powers that there is interest in moving such a plan forward. Aligning the cause with environmental and public transit advocacy groups would be key in achieving these early goals.

Key Facts

- Over 30,000 people die in the US every year from transportation related air pollution ^[2]
- Transportation is the second largest greenhouse gas emitting sector in the US with private vehicles making up a majority of the emissions ^[1]
- The private vehicle industry accounts for billions of dollars in damages and deaths annually ^[14]

Talking Points

- Public transit supports high population density development and saves energy ^[3]
- Public transit authorities frequently have higher energy standards than they are federally required ^[3]
- Car free zones can eliminate over 20% of traffic and encourage more sustainable commuting ^[8]

Action Plan Snapshot

- **Outreach:** As we are seeing students play an increasingly larger part in politics, it is important to educate students at high school and college levels on the dangers of private vehicle pollution to provide them with the knowledge base to advocate for car free zones.

- **Policy Affairs:** The movement to implement car free zones must target town hall meetings to bring awareness to the public in a setting where city officials can be held publicly accountable for what they say. After bringing awareness to the public, it will be necessary to lobby for car free zones before the mayor and urban developer for the city, who will be most equipped to enact change.
- **Coalition:** CarFree Movement and National Complete Streets Coalition are both groups that advocate for higher investment in public transportation and accessibility to the roads beyond private vehicles. If partnered, we will be able to pool resources and knowledge to present the most cohesive and unified platform.
- **Communication Plan:** Slogans are effective soundbites which capture the essence of a larger idea. Shift to Public to Save the People can be the slogan used by the Car Free movement. The movement should prioritize local media outlets and town halls to raise awareness at the local level first before addressing higher levels of power. Once on the national level, the movement would need to partner with famous figures who can rally support. Daryl Hannah and Rachel McAdams are both big proponents of sustainable transportation and could reach

their respective followers on social media about the cause.

- **Timeline:** Months 1-2 - Organize task force and gather information; Months 3-4 - Gather partners and start raising community awareness; Months 5-6 – Start nationwide, coordinated lobbying on town halls

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Banning African Lion Trophy Imports

By Matt D'Ambrosio, mjd393@cornell.edu

Ending the distribution of permits to import African Lion trophies will heavily decrease the number of African Lions that are hunted thus bolstering the conservation of this species.

Background

African Lion populations have halved in the past twenty years, and current estimates have their population at around 24,000 individuals in the wild.^[1] One hotly debated proposal to aide in conservation is to expand trophy hunting, but there must be proof that the hunting programs, and the funds they raise, are actually driving an increase lion populations. President Obama heavily restricted the number of permits allowing for the import of lion trophies distributed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Since then, President Trump's USFWS has rolled back these restrictions which includes allowing imports from countries with questionable or weak lion conservation programs such as Zambia and Zimbabwe.^[2]

Other than rhinos, lions carry the most expensive trophy hunting fees. This combined with the large number of lions hunted annually means they provide the most trophy hunting revenue of any endangered species. Trophy hunters claim

their fees pay for developing countries' health, education and conservation services.^[3] However, there are serious concerns about the legitimacy of these claims and about whether or not trophy hunting has negative impacts on lion populations.

Policy Idea

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service should stop issuing permits that allow for the importation of lion trophies into the United States on the basis of the Endangered Species Act and its amended rules. Trophies should be defined as any part of a lion that was killed for sport regardless of whether or not the lion was captive or wild. This would serve to curtail the number of harmful lion trophy hunts that occur in Africa.

Policy Analysis

Banning African Lion imports would discourage Americans from travelling to Africa to hunt lions, which is significant because Americans

account for a disproportionate amount of the individuals who trophy hunt lions abroad. 3781 lion trophies were imported by the United States between 2012 and 2016.^[4] Of those, 1738 were wild lions, and the United States accounts for 65% of all global lion trophy imports.^[5] The non-wild lion trophies came from canned hunting—a practice widely condemned, even by hunting organizations, as cruel and having no relation to lion conservation whatsoever.^[6] Because of what a huge share of the lion trophy market America represents, the United States banning imports would have a more meaningful impact than any other country by far.

Trophy hunters claim their hunting fees pay for health, education, and conservation services across the countries in which they hunt; however, countries such as Zimbabwe and Tanzania have severe issues with systemic corruption, and as little as 22% of the trophy hunting revenue goes to conservation agencies in

Africa.^[7] Regardless, the \$132 million dollars which is estimated to be put into Sub-Saharan African countries by trophy hunters amounts to less than .03% of Southern Africa's regional GDP.⁸ In fact, Botswana had the highest percentage of its GDP tied to trophy hunting at 0.13%, but despite this, Botswana illegalized trophy hunting in 2014.^[8,9] 12 countries other African countries also ban lion trophy hunting, and this gives credence to the idea that decreasing lion trophy hunting has more than tenable economic implications, and positive conservation implications.^[10]

Tanzania is one country which allows trophy hunting, but there are questions as to whether or not it is sustainable. In a study of three Tanzanian lion populations, two populations saw small levels of trophy hunting with a significant amount of photo tourism, while a third experienced a large amount of trophy hunting. The most actively trophy-hunted population was the only one of the three to see overall population decline over time.^[11] The study concluded via modelling that it was in fact the trophy hunting more so than habitat loss or human-lion conflict that led to the population decline observed.^[12]

Next Steps

I would suggest the implementation of a ban on lion trophy imports. The best place to start would be to use the Endangered Species Act of 1973. Section 4.d of the original legislation reads “the inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms” qualifies a species as threatened or endangered.^[13] The Department of Interior and Fish and Wildlife Service's 2015 addition of lions to the ESA has recently will give an import ban on African Lion trophies significantly more justification.^[14] The 2015 rule includes a provision establishing the need for hunting to contribute to lion conservation for its continuance, and since there is evidence that it does not, it is within the Fish and Wildlife Service's authority to immediately stop issuing permits for trophy imports. There are two other ways to go about stopping imports. The first is to add an amendment to Section 10 of the Endangered Species Act, which addresses the issuing of hunting permits, through congress to exempt the African Lion from any permit distributions.^[15] Secondly, the President can use the Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act of 1954 to directly assist in the conservation programs of countries which receive aid through this act.^[16] This means

the President, with the consent of the foreign state of course, could convince countries to end lion trophy hunts within their borders or even ban Americans from exporting lion trophies.

Key Facts

- Lion populations have halved in the past twenty years, and current reliable estimates put their wild numbers at 24,000.^[17]
- 65% of the world wild lion trophies imports go to America.^[18]
- As little as 22% of revenue from lion trophy hunts go to conservation agencies in Africa.^[19]

Talking Points

- Trophy hunting has been shown to decrease lion populations—let alone improve them.
- Removing America's disproportionate percentage of the trophy hunting market would be a large boon to lion conservation.
- The few African countries which still allow lion trophy hunting are known for corruption and failure to ensure the trophy hunting fees are used for conservation.
- Based on the 2015 addition of lions to the Endangered Species Act, The Fish and Wildlife Service now has the authority to implement a ban on lion trophy imports

Action Plan Snapshot

Since 86% of Americans disapprove of big game hunting for sport, and only 39% say that if the money went towards conservation their opinion would change, the majority of the public already supports this policy.^[20] Also, since 68% of women, as opposed to 55% of men, would support outlawing trophy hunting, it would be advantageous to target women when building the natural citizen coalition.^[21]

Organizations to partner with in promoting this policy would be the Humane Society of the United States and the World Wildlife Fund. Outreach to find supporters could be done at conservation events such as the annual New York City Ivory Crush. Social media, where stories such as Cecil the Lion's and the Trump's big game hunts have spread would be a critical tool in garnering support. The most important factor is stressing the fact that the Fish and Wildlife Service currently has the right the stop issuing permits and that the timeline of the policy implementation could be as little as one month, support would hopefully be strong and overwhelming without need for long term retention. The goal would be to pressure the Fish and Wildlife Service to implement the ban via intense public outcry.

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Protecting Public Lands: A Plan to Save Our Open Spaces

By Julia Dixon, jpd238@cornell.edu

President Trump's attempt to reduce the amount of federally protected land at the Bear Ears national Monument and Grand Staircase Escalante Monument could have devastating consequences for other federally protected sites and should not be permitted. In order to prevent a problem in the future, Congress should Institute a policy that would require a majority in Congress to approve any changes to existing federal land designations.

Background

Ever since the Yellowstone National Park was founded in 1872, the national park system has grown in size and popularity. The National Park System in the United States is currently comprised of more than 400 areas, including parks and monuments, which covers more than 84 million acres of land.^[1] Numerous laws have been enacted in order to protect these various sites including the Antiquities Act. Theodore Roosevelt enacted this law in 1906 making it possible for presidents to protect “national monuments” or areas that house historical artifacts, sites or objects.^[2] Many presidents have taken advantage of this law to place lands under federal protection. In fact, nearly half of the country's national parks were originally protected as national monuments.^[3] While many people believe national parks and

monuments are crucial in preserving our history and national spaces, not all legislatures agree on which lands to protect. Since he took office, President Trump has reviewed and suggested modifying several historical monuments.^[4] Two sites in particular, Bears Ears National Monument and the Grand Staircase Escalante Monument, both in Utah, have received considerable attention. Many Republican lawmakers complain that these protections forbid Utah from accessing national resources in these lands. Specifically, Republicans have criticized the recent designation of Bears Ears National Monument by Former President Barack Obama as federal overreach that prevents potential commercial use or natural-gas extraction.^[5] In December, Trump called for the Bear Ears National Monument to be reduced from 1.3 million acres to

228,784 acres split into two separate areas, and for Grande Staircase Escalante Monument to be reduced by half and divided into three areas.^[6]

Policy Idea

Federal Congress should be given an input when changing the designation of land areas. Under the Antiquities Act, presidents will still be able to designate land according to their preferences, but if a president wishes to alter the classification of the land in some way, they must receive congressional approval. That way, land designations cannot be changed just because a new president is elected.

Policy Analysis

Legislators typically cite economic drawbacks and federal overreach when explaining why national monuments should be shrunk. For

example, some federal Utah senators have argued that the federal government overstepped when they designated Bears Ears and Grand Staircase Escalante as national monuments.^[7] However, Illinois Senator Dick Durbin explains that he has analyzed the Bears Ears Monument. Utah senators have agreed with Durbin in his assessment that there is no oil or gas available to be drilled. While there is a small amount of uranium, the area is more important as cultural sites for Native Americans.^[8] In fact, safeguarding these areas actually draws business to the area by attracting new residents and tourists. In a study conducted by Headwaters Economics, researchers found that communities in Garfield and Kane counties in the Grand Staircase-Escalante Region, experienced significant growth after the national monument was designated in 1996. From 2001 to 2015, the Grand Staircase-Escalante Region experiences a 13% population growth, a 24% increase in jobs, a 32% increase in real personal income and a 17% increase in real per capita income. The region experienced considerable during its tenure as a national monument. On the other hand, the future of oil and gas cultivation in the region is much less certain. According to a study compile by Utah's State Geologist, M. Lee Allison, prior to 1990, there was only a small number of exploratory oil and gas well in the Grande Escalante

Monument due to remoteness, lack of pipelines, low success rates, collapsing world oil and gas prices and environmental concerns.^[9] The study notes that in recent years the petroleum industry has increased interest in the region, and "although the risk of failure is high, the monument could contain major accumulations of oil" (Allison et al, 1997).^[10] In recent years, visitors have been visiting Grand Staircase Escalante in record numbers. The rate of visitation has accelerated sharply in the last few years, and Utah has nearly doubled its amount of yearly visitors since Grand Staircase-Escalante was created in 1996.^[11] While these economic advantages are contested, since some argue that the energy jobs would provide a huge advantage to the state, there are other non-economic advantages to keeping National Monuments intact. Scientific communities, such as The Society of Vertebrate Paleontology, which is suing to defend these Utah parks, want to protect these research areas. Scientists have found thousands of important fossils including the one of the oldest known triceratops in these natural areas.^[12] Therefore, while the economic benefits may be contested, there has undeniably been an increase in the local economy due to these areas being designated as National Monuments. In addition, protecting these areas not only protects the natural environment

for future generations to enjoy, it also protect cultural sites and scientific sites.

Next Steps

Given this analysis, I recommend this policy be implemented. Congress members should introduce this proposal and gather support from environmental groups and other states that do not want to see their land designations changed.

Key Facts

- The National Park System in the United States is currently comprised of more than 400 areas, including parks and monuments, which covers more than 84 million acres of land.
- In December, Trump called for the Bear Ears National Monument to be reduced from 1.3 million acres to 228,784 acres split into two separate areas, and for Grande Staircase Escalante Monument to be reduced by half and divided into three areas.
- Polling commissioned by The Salt Lake Tribune and the University of Utah's Hinckley Institute of Politics, found that Utahns oppose breaking Grande Staircase Escalante Monument into smaller monuments by a margin of 2-to-1.
- From 2001 to 2015, the Grand Staircase-Escalante Region experiences a 13% population growth, a 24%

increase in jobs, a 32% increase in real personal income and a 17% increase in real per capita income.

Talking Points

- President Trump should not be able to remove national parks from federally protected lands without Congressional approval
- The National Parks are popular tourists destinations
- Grande Staircase Escalante Monument generated significant economic growth

Action Plan Snapshot

- Partner with Senator Tom Udall (D-NM) who also has proposed introducing new legislation to protect national monuments

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Preventing Algal Blooms: Restricting Pesticide Use in the Town of Skaneateles, NY

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In the summer of 2017, an alarmingly large algal bloom plagued Skaneateles Lake, threatening the safety of all those who obtain drinking water from Skaneateles Lake. Pesticides are one of the main pollutants that contribute to the formation of harmful algal blooms.^[1] This proposal suggests that section 148-34 h of the Skaneateles Town Zoning code be amended to ban all pesticide use within 500 feet of the shoreline. This extension of the pesticide-restricted area will prevent further pesticides from infiltrating the lake water, and contributing to further algal bloom growth.

Background

New York's Finger Lakes region has long provided both functional and aesthetic use for New York State. Areas surrounding Skaneateles Lake and Cayuga Lake are revered tourist destinations, attracting thousands of tourists each summer. The lakes also provide drinking water to the surrounding area. In particular, Skaneateles Lake provides minimally filtered drinking water to the City of Syracuse's 145,170 residents, through a twenty-mile pipeline extending from Skaneateles Lake to Syracuse's reservoirs.^[2]

Recently, there has been a troubling amount of algal blooms in the finger lakes, threatening the quality and safety of the water supply. Until this past summer, Skaneateles Lake was presumed to be unable to be affected by

algal blooms due to its oligotrophic properties.^[3] Algal blooms are caused by increased nutrient runoff, supporting the growth of algae and cyanobacteria.^[4] Nutrient runoff can be described but not limited to runoff from soil erosion, fertilized agriculture and fertilized lawns. This past summer, a massive algal bloom appeared in Skaneateles Lake, preventing residents from swimming in the lake and drinking the water from the lake. The algal bloom's presence causes especially large amounts of concern due to the lake water's minimally filtered processing before being transported to the city of Syracuse. If algal blooms persist in Skaneateles Lake, the city of Syracuse will be at risk of contaminated water supply.

Policy Idea

Section 148-34H of the Town of Skaneateles's Zoning Code should be amended to state "No application of pesticides, herbicides or fertilizer within 500 feet of the lake line or watercourse excluding those farmers participating in the whole farm management program". The previous prohibition of 50 feet of the lake line did not make a significant effort to prevent pesticide runoff from polluting the lake. This increase will significantly aid in reduction of fertilizer runoff into the lake, reducing the possibility of algal blooms.

Policy Analysis

It is proposed that Section 148-34H of the Town of

Skaneateles's Zoning Code be amended to extend the restriction of pesticide use from within 50 feet of the lake line to 500 feet of the lake line. This analysis will 1) Provide different harmful effects of algal blooms and their causes, 2) Examine the current restriction and assess if a 50-foot pesticide restriction is effective in preventing fertilizer run-off, 3) Examine any budgetary or implementation restraints regarding the proposed amendment, and 4) Hypothesize the effect of this amendment on the targeted community.

Algal blooms are caused by a number of factors, those most influential including natural processes and anthropogenic loadings leading to eutrophication. Natural processes can include circulation, upwelling relaxation, and river flow.^[5] It is found that anthropogenic loadings are the primary culprit of the increasing presence of algal blooms in bodies of water, specifically freshwater lakes. Algal blooms are an indicator of water eutrophication, caused by over-enrichment of anthropogenic nutrients in water bodies. Nitrogen and phosphorus play a key role in the formation of algal blooms, particularly in freshwater bodies.^[6] Severe presence of algal blooms can exert harmful effects on cellular processes of organisms, including humans. The most severe effects of algal blooms include bird, fish, and mammal deaths, respiratory or^[7]

digestive tract issues, memory loss, seizures, and lesions and skin irritation. Specifically, fertilizer run-off has been criticized as one of the main anthropogenic causes of algal blooms, stemming from agricultural and civilian use.^[8] Common fertilizers and pesticides contain phosphates^[9], glyphosates, and 2,4-dichlorophenoxyacetic acid, all which contribute to nutrient growth and eutrophication in freshwater lakes.^[10]

The current regulation restricts pesticide use from within 50 feet of the lake line.^[11] This analysis claims that this restriction is not effective in preventing pesticide runoff from entering Skaneateles Lake, and that a larger barrier should be amended into the Skaneateles Town Zoning Code to adopt further measures to prevent algal blooms from occurring, in light of the threat posed by the Summer 2017 algal bloom. The increase in size of this barrier is currently proposed to be extended to 500 feet from the shoreline, but ultimately, the extension will be determined by experts in the field. This analysis argues that given the evidence stated above, further steps need to be taken to prevent another algal bloom from occurring in Skaneateles Lake, and threatening the water supply of the greater Syracuse area. Pesticides are a harm to both humans directly through application, and indirectly through their contribution to

algae growth.^[12] By restricting a larger quantity of land from pesticide use, there will be less of a chance for contaminated run-off to enter Skaneateles Lake, and contribute to the growth of a harmful algal bloom. In marking the restriction at 500 feet, there will be 10 times the amount of shoreline protected compared to previously, lessening the risk of pesticide contamination in the lake.

There are no estimated budgetary/implementation restrictions of this proposal. The amendment's passage will require a hearing, at no additional cost. The extension of the restricted shoreline would not directly impose a cost on any of the newly affected areas. In regard to community effects, many homes would no longer legally be allowed to spray pesticide on their properties. This analysis estimates there may be potential community backlash to this proposal, and suggests that the public should be educated about the harmful impacts of pesticide use, fostering community support for stricter restrictions on pesticides.

Next Steps

After researching the harmful effects of algal blooms, and the contribution that pesticide use plays in the formation of algal bloom, it is proposed that the Town of Skaneateles should move ahead in amending Section 148-34H of the Town of Skaneateles's Zoning Code,

extending the restriction of pesticide use from within 50 feet of the lake line to 500 feet of the lake line. However, further research may need to be done to assess if the extension to 500 feet is the appropriate extension. It is suggested that experts should be consulted before extending the restriction, however, the restriction should be extended beyond 50 feet regardless. Once an expert is consulted, the proposed extension can be amended into Section 148-34H, and have ensured lawfulness for three years. After those three years, an assessment can be done to measure if the ban was effective or not, and judged on those results, the town can vote again whether to make the amendment permanent, or appeal the amendment.

Key Facts

- Algal blooms have harmful effects on the communities surrounding the affected body of water, including but not limited to; respiratory issues, digestive tract issues, memory loss, and death.^[13]
- Anthropogenic loadings leading to eutrophication are one of the main causes of algal blooms.^[14]
- The chemicals in pesticides can contribute to the cyanobacteria growth in harmful algal blooms^[15]

Talking Points

- Skaneateles Lake's water quality is threatened by harmful algal blooms
- There have been limited attempts in finding legislative solutions to prevent large algal blooms from persisting in the lake
- This analysis proposes a small-scale solution to limit one of the causes of algal blooms by increasing the amount of shore line restricted from pesticide use
- This proposal requires limited funds and activity to ensure its effectiveness in preventing the spread of algal blooms

Action Plan Snapshot

Campus/Community Outreach:

It's recommended that the affected Skaneateles community be informed and surveyed in regard to this amendment to gauge if there is community support for the measure proposed. First, an informational flyer regarding the danger of algal blooms and what the measure is proposing will be sent to the affected constituency. Then a poll will be proposed on the Skaneateles Town website, and respondents will have the opportunity to provide their feedback. Following the poll, it can be assessed whether further lobbying of the community needs to take place, or whether the amendment can be proposed to the town council.

Policy Affairs: The proposal will need to be presented in front of the Skaneateles Town Council for a vote. There will need to be a presentation that's prepared to provide the council with the relevant information regarding the amendment.

Coalition: The following partners will be contacted regarding this proposal:

- The Finger Lakes Land Trust, The Skaneateles Lake Association, New York Rural Water Association, and the New York Water Environment Association.

Communication Plan: As outlined above, there will be online communication polling, and a pamphlet distributed to the affected Skaneateles residents. The Syracuse Post Standard may be contacted to cover the amendment. This amendment should be publicized as one of the first concrete legislative responses that addresses the harmful algae problem in Skaneateles Lake.

Timeline: The pamphlets regarding the proposed amendment should be strategically administered to the public in late July and August, when algal blooms are most frequent. The online poll will be available following the administration of the pamphlets for two weeks. Following the online poll, there will be a week period where it is assessed if further lobbying on behalf of the amendment needs to occur. If no

more lobbying needs to occur, the proposal should be brought to the Skaneateles Zoning Board's September Meeting Agenda for a vote.

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Reducing Overcrowding in National Parks: Seasonal Pricing Policy in Yosemite NP

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The U.S. National Parks, established to preserve natural resources “for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations,” are increasingly overridden with crowds, particularly in the peak summer months, threatening the parks’ long-term sustainability and the quality of the visitor experience.^[1] Comparing percentages of visitors in peak versus off-peak seasons before and after the policy was enacted in March 2015 analyzes the effectiveness of Yosemite National Park’s seasonal pricing policy. Based on this analysis, other national parks should enact seasonal pricing policies with an optimal seasonal price difference to balance resource preservation and visitor experience with accessibility.

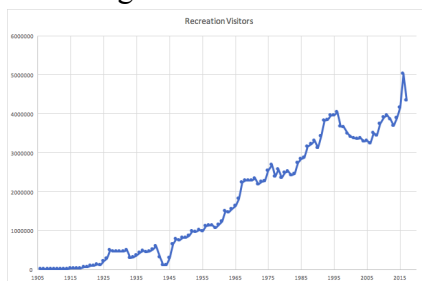
Background

Annual visitation to Yosemite National Park has increased exponentially since the founding of the park in 1906, with a majority of visitors hailing in peak season months, from April to October. Overcrowding in peak months strains park infrastructure such as shuttles, parking lots, roads, and restroom facilities.

In March 2015, in an effort to standardize entrance fees and redistribute crowds into off-peak months, after reviewing over 3,000 public comments, the National Park Service (NPS) increased peak season entrance fees for Yosemite National Park from \$20 to \$30 per vehicle and introduced reduced off peak season (November-March) fees of \$25. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, increased peak season fees reflect inflation since 1997, while off peak

season fees reflect a 15% reduction.^[2]

The NPS’ goals, which include the optimization of visitor experience, equal access for all, and long-term preservation of the natural resource, make it more difficult to match demand and capacity than for-profit firms.^[3] The NPS must both allow visitor access to the parks and protect the parks from deterioration caused by visitor use.^[4] Fee increases can help preserve the natural resources and improve the visitor experience, but also restrict access by further excluding low-income visitors.



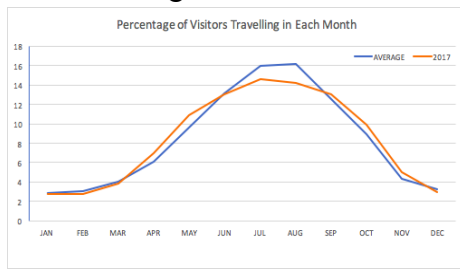
Policy Idea

The National Park Service should charge lower entrance fees for off-peak seasons to help redistribute crowds over the entire year and thereby reduce strain on the park in peak seasons. Peak season entrance fees should not be increased, except to reflect inflation, but rather off-peak season fees should be decreased. The reduced need for infrastructure to manage peak season crowds would compensate for revenue lost in decreased off-peak season entrance fees.

Policy Analysis

The NPS introduced lower entrance fees for off-peak seasons in 2015 in an effort to encourage visitors to come in the winter months and thus reduce

overcrowding in the summer.



In July and August for 2015, 2016, and 2017, the percentage of total annual visitors was lower than the respective averages for those months since 2000. In August 2016 and 2017, the monthly visitors as a percentage of total annual visitors reached record lows of 13.77% and 14.2%, respectively. This data suggests that, while the 2015 fee increases did not decrease the total visitation, there is a slight correlation between the creation of peak season pricing and a decrease in the number of visitors coming to the park in peak season months.

Adjusting entrance fees to reflect inflation helps maintain revenue for the NPS while preserving equal access to the parks by not further excluding low-income visitors. The introduction of a seasonal pricing policy can redistribute crowds into off-peak months, thereby improving the visitor experience, lessening the environmental strain on the park's natural resources, and reducing the need for new infrastructure to manage peak season crowds. While the financially strapped NPS might protest fee reductions for off-peak seasons, redistribution of crowds could help eliminate the need for costly measures such as expanding parking lots and shuttle systems to accommodate peak season crowds. Furthermore, if coupled with an

initiative to standardize park entrance fees to reflect inflation, as was done in Yosemite, the NPS would still gain revenue.

Next Steps

The NPS should conduct further research optimal seasonal price differences to redistribute crowds without excluding certain groups. Visitor use data from Yosemite, analyzed above, shows a slight correlation between the establishment of a \$5 dollar discount for off-peak entrance fees and a reduction in percentage of visitors coming in peak months. Yet more trials of seasonal pricing policies need to be tried to draw more conclusive results on their effectiveness. Future trials should first conduct surveys on visitors' willingness to pay in peak versus off-peak seasons and examine potential constraining factors on visitors limiting their ability to opt to travel in off-peak seasons.

Stakeholders should lobby for this policy by garnering public support and demonstrating its effectiveness through pricing trials in Yosemite and other national parks facing overcrowding, such as Zion and Yellowstone. The policy of standardizing entrance fees to reflect inflation will likely trigger opposition from the public and equity advocates, which should be addressed using visitor survey results and greater emphasis on off-peak fee reductions.

Key Facts

- Over 5 million people visited Yosemite National Park in

2016, a 20% increase from 2015.^[5]

- From 2000-2015, an average of 82.4% percent of visitors came to Yosemite in the peak-season, from April to October.
- In 2016, the first full year the seasonal price policy was in place in Yosemite, 79.9% of visitors came in the peak-season.
- In a 2006 visitor survey administered by the NPS, 22% of summer and 11% of fall visitors responded that campgrounds were "very" or "extremely" crowded.^[6]

Talking Points

- A seasonal pricing policy encourages redistribution, rather than overall reduction, of annual park visitors, preserving accessibility.
- Severe overcrowding during peak season months negatively impacts the visitor experience and strains the park's natural resources, as people veer off trails to avoid crowds.
- This policy has shown some initial success in Yosemite, and further research and trials could optimize the pricing scheme for use in other overcrowded parks, such as Zion and Yellowstone.

Action Plan Snapshot

- **Campus/Community Outreach:** Develop surveys on personal value of National Parks and willingness to pay for entrance for Cornell

students and local Ithaca residents. Compile information and hold open forums to determine the most effective seasonal price difference for redistributing crowds without further excluding certain groups. Organize letter-writing and phone-banking sessions to recruit federal support.

- **Policy Affairs:** Participate in NPS public and online forums about price increases. Lobby congress for greater funding to NPS to supplement the fee reduction and continue to promote accessibility of National Parks.
- **Coalition:** NPS, U.S. Senate Subcommittee on National Parks, National Parks Conservation Association, National Park Foundation, National Recreation and Park Association, National Park Trust
- **Communication Plan:** Media message focused on reduction of fees in off-peak months, with an emphasis on personal savings and reduced overcrowding. Promote exploration of parks in winter months through advertisements and education.
- **Timeline:**

- o December-January: garner local input and support on seasonal pricing policy.
- o February: meet with stakeholders to form coalition.
- o March-May: participate in NPS public and online forums to influence pricing policy changes.

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Appendix

2015 Entrance Fee Increase, Yosemite National Park

Type of Fee	Effective 3/1/2015	Effective 1/1/2016
Per Vehicle Entrance, 7-day pass	March \$25 April - October \$30 November - December \$25	January - March \$25 April - October \$30 November - December \$25
Individual Entrance		\$15
Motorcycle Entrance	\$15 per motorcycle	\$20 per motorcycle
Yosemite National Park Annual Pass		\$60

Recreation Visitors by Month, Yosemite National Park

Year	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	Total
2017	120,020	119,421	166,790	302,553	471,844	565,932	633,251	615,992	566,279	428,627	217,027	127,276	4,238,890
2016	119,790	120,601	186,000	305,092	475,709	570,644	702,724	692,200	598,628	481,222	218,998	126,648	4,208,868
2015	128,216	135,216	194,667	344,667	281,228	486,231	546,231	626,809	636,936	327,402	157,223	169,425	4,189,217
2014	112,120	113,600	166,700	292,722	370,208	496,268	620,663	664,217	497,051	356,709	193,628	116,648	3,882,662
2013	103,800	114,440	165,609	231,178	370,422	508,941	611,238	582,217	460,855	279,226	161,206	113,479	3,681,291
2012	106,488	113,841	154,667	241,102	350,266	496,266	623,911	660,117	482,004	322,687	161,848	128,240	3,637,668
2011	100,714	95,298	109,433	211,371	358,248	503,241	704,553	696,249	533,502	366,449	179,679	127,621	3,591,200
2010	160,488	160,770	184,641	224,441	344,109	454,109	615,646	619,617	520,310	395,970	198,800	148,800	3,524,668
2009	161,884	161,295	173,711	239,428	399,683	481,342	596,391	643,300	471,530	344,826	151,297	110,545	3,373,672
2008	156,290	167,240	182,296	189,472	300,847	386,872	510,822	528,284	411,862	288,771	169,699	104,618	3,252,644
2007	169,882	169,841	155,025	219,854	374,184	466,654	642,235	550,372	417,882	288,122	179,866	118,251	3,503,628
2006	169,020	169,298	184,676	229,212	326,017	449,946	518,844	508,017	377,200	252,022	126,704	73,893	3,280,911
2005	116,980	111,266	117,200	174,211	280,322	405,847	504,691	604,691	516,266	316,266	152,026	112,026	3,278,664
2004	108,806	113,695	141,766	189,682	295,511	426,882	515,799	570,514	426,684	306,019	149,828	116,311	3,161,887
2003	108,485	101,897	142,441	192,926	315,897	426,619	528,849	591,296	484,619	264,661	119,876	58,849	3,068,751
2002	103,613	103,444	136,253	216,087	317,009	426,618	528,440	546,981	388,707	234,481	144,928	105,999	3,000,905

Monthly Recreation Visitors as a Percentage of Total Annual Visitors

Year	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
2017	2.77	2.79	3.85	6.98	10.88	13.04	14.6	14.2	13.06	9.91	5.02	2.85
2016	2.76	4.01	5.71	6.07	9.09	13.99	15.52	13.77	11.5	9.61	4.29	3.19
2015	3.09	3.29	4.69	6.78	9.43	13.14	15.08	15.35	12.71	8.01	4.08	3.36
2014	2.89	2.92	3.78	6.25	8.38	12.78	16.96	16.83	12.03	9.14	3.25	3.46
2013	2.82	3.31	4.48	6.26	10.04	13.79	16.27	14.96	12.49	7.57	4.27	3.56
2012	3.13	2.94	3.55	6.31	9.25	13.71	16.17	17.13	13.51	8.37	3.68	3.25
2011	2.85	2.97	2.54	5.86	9.02	12.75	17.83	17.71	13.3	9.12	5.02	3.23
2010	2.46	2.57	3.84	5.75	9.8	13.36	16.5	16.91	13.33	9.13	3.81	2.23
2009	2.73	2.11	3.55	6.18	10.69	13.93	15.69	17.21	12.62	9.28	4.05	2.96
2008	3.77	3.45	4.48	5.82	10.33	13.79	15.73	15.85	12.15	8.61	4.28	2.86
2007	3.85	2.88	3.88	6.28	10.48	13.3	15.51	15.7	11.93	8.51	3.1	3.38
2006	3.22	3.12	3.97	5.84	9.44	11.81	15.76	16.29	13	9.21	5.1	3.22
2005	2.76	3.14	4.34	5.91	9.22	12.5	16.78	14.7	13.02	9.64	4.62	3.37
2004	3.05	3.24	4.48	6.96	9.94	13.7	16.21	15.49	11.99	8.3	3.71	2.95
2003	3.46	3.31	4.07	5.68	8.3	13.2	18.88	17.88	12	9.36	4.04	3.34
2002	3.24	3.38	4.22	5.55	8.79	12.99	15.28	16.98	12.69	8.95	4.46	3.46
2001	3.04	3.02	4.22	5.75	9.38	12.88	15.7	17.55	13.31	7.85	4.09	3.22
2000	2.75	3.05	4.01	6.15	9.32	13.07	16.13	16.08	11.43	9.54	4.26	3.7
Average	2.91	3.02	4.09	6.11	9.6	13.17	15.94	16.15	12.54	8.93	4.32	3.22

Difference from Average

Year	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
2017	-0.14	-0.27	-0.24	0.87	1.28	-0.13	-1.34	-1.95	0.52	0.98	0.7	-0.29
2016	-0.13	0.89	1.62	-0.46	-0.51	0.82	-0.42	-2.38	-0.44	0.88	0.83	-0.03
2015	0.18	0.24	0.6	0.67	0.23	-0.03	-0.86	-0.8	0.17	-0.32	-0.24	0.16
2014	-0.02	-0.1	-0.31	0.14	-1.02	-0.39	0.12	0.7	-0.51	0.22	0.83	0.34
2013	-0.09	0.08	0.39	0.15	0.44	0.62	0.63	-1.19	-0.05	-1.36	0.05	0.34
2012	0.22	-0.08	-0.54	0.21	-0.35	0.54	0.23	0.98	-0.03	-0.56	-0.44	0.03
2011	-0.36	-0.45	-1.05	-0.25	-0.18	-0.42	1.89	1.56	0.96	-0.19	-0.8	0.01
2010	-0.45	-0.45	-0.25	-0.35	0.2	0.19	0.56	0.76	0.79	0.2	-0.51	-0.89
2009	-0.18	-0.91	-0.54	0.07	1.09	-0.24	-0.25	1.06	0.88	-0.35	-0.27	-0.36
2008	-0.14	0.12	0.39	-0.29	0.93	0.82	-0.21	-0.1	-0.39	-0.32	-0.04	-0.36
2007	-0.06	-0.14	-0.21	0.17	1.08	0.13	-0.43	0.45	-0.61	-0.42	0.78	0.16
2006	0.32	0.11	-0.22	-0.27	-0.06	1.36	-0.18	0.14	0.46	0.28	0.29	0
2005	-0.15	0.12	0.25	-0.2	-0.38	-0.67	0.84	-1.45	0.48	0.71	0.3	0.15
2004	0.14	0.22	0.39	0.85	0.34	0.53	0.27	-0.66	-0.55	-0.83	-0.61	-0.27
2003	0.55	0.28	-0.02	-0.85	-1.3	0.03	-0.66	1.73	0.54	0.43	-0.28	0.14
2002	0.33	0.36	0.13	-0.56	-0.81	-0.18	-0.66	0.83	0.15	0.02	0.14	0.24
2001	0.13	0	0.13	-0.38	-0.12	-0.23	-0.24	1.4	0.77	-0.08	-0.23	0
2000	-0.16	0.02	-0.08	0.24	-0.28	0.2	0.19	-0.07	-1.11	0.61	-0.06	0.48

Rapid Increase in Automation: Protecting Workers from Mass Unemployment

By Lang Ming, lm656@cornell.edu

The exponential growth of technology causes the rate of automation in industrial activities to rapidly increase. Creating new laws facilitated by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to tax companies based on the rate of automation used by each company and investing the collected revenue into the U.S. Social Security program will prepare the government for the aftermath of the sudden burst in unemployment in the near future.

Background

While machines used to be more efficient than humans only in certain tasks, more recent evidence suggests that if the technology is mature, computers can virtually do anything humans are capable of and become an ideal source of labor to replace humans due to its high efficiency and low cost. Researchers from University of Oxford found that in 2013, 47% of workers in America had jobs at high risk of potential automation.^[1] Although many critics claim that similar threat has already existed for decades and the U.S. economy has never been significantly affected, it should be noted that the current technological advancements are distinct from the tradition ones. For instance, the variety of occupations impacted now includes most of the jobs in the U.S. market and the time required for technology

to be fully adopted by companies has rapidly decreased.^[2]

Currently, there is little consideration for tax on automation in America even though numerous public figures such as Bill Gates, Stephen Hawking, and Elon Musk have been advocating for the issue.^[3,4,5] Many hesitate to endorse such policy because they worry that it may limit innovations and hurt the productivity of the U.S. economy, while supporters argue that benefits brought by a better economy is only desirable when distributed fairly among all workers.^[6]

Policy Idea

The United States Congress shall work with the FCC to establish a legal definition of automation that includes most of the advanced technologies (e.g. robot, artificial intelligence) used in industrial

activities. The IRS shall ensure that companies report gains from automation and implement a tax on each company that is at least 25% of its revenue made using automation.

Policy Analysis

Taxation based on the amount of automation used gives companies more freedom to operate than limiting the amount of automation a company could use. One of the main arguments proposed by supporters of free automation claims that increased use of industrial technology elevates the productivity of many industries and increases the total capital processed by the U.S. economy. Adding taxation without limiting how much automation can be used slows down the growth rate of automation, but it still allows companies and consumers benefit from the decreased cost of products.

The revenue from the automation tax is invested into unemployment insurance and social security benefits, which addresses the objection that automation creates new jobs and thus should not be regulated. There are two types of jobs created mentioned in this objection: some already exist, because increased productivity leads to increased demand, hence the jobs related to the same product also demands more labor^[8]; some are simply new, such as the management of machines. However, the former type of jobs created are likely to be marginal given the extreme automation that could happen based on the status quo. Demand cannot increase infinitely; when it reaches the point of diminishing marginal return and yet almost all the jobs are automated, a spike in unemployment is inevitable. The increase in the latter type of jobs might resolve mass unemployment, but it will also shift the focus of market labor demanded. Unemployed workers now need to seek more education to qualify for the new jobs. Without sufficient unemployment insurance and social security benefits, workers will not be able to acquire the additional skills needed to adapt to the market^[9]. However, taxation based on the amount of automation used serves as an effective redistribution of resources, allowing workers to keep living an adequate life even when mass unemployment hits, which provides unemployed

workers with opportunities to obtain extra training. Tax on automation merely hinders the advancements of technology marginally, while it brings a more equitable benefit of increased productivity over time.

Tax policies based on automation has already been discussed and introduced in other countries. In 2016, the idea of a tax on automation is introduced in a draft report to the European parliament prepared by members of the Committee on Legal Affairs. Concerns such as robots creating significant unemployment were raised, and the report encouraged consideration to “be given to the possible need to introduce corporate reporting requirements on the extent and proportion of the contribution of robotics and AI to the economic results of a company for the purpose of taxation and social security contributions.”^[10] In South Korea, the government suggested a decrease in corporate tax deduction rate based on automation as compensation to welfare programs amid the rising unemployment rate.^[11]

Next Steps

This policy may face two major difficulties: having a rigorous definition of automation and being able to overcome objections from opposing parties. The former results from the fact that the U.S. has not yet established a standard legal definition of automation. It is crucial that the FCC performs in

depth research to create a definition that makes this legislation practical and enforceable. Since the legislation negatively affects a lot of big corporates’ benefits, it may also face strong objections from these corporations and some other political parties. It is then necessary to encourage labor unions to bond together and lobby for the policy. Starting from introducing the effect that modern automation may have on the labor market, unions will be incentivized to help push the legislation forward. The whole process from the drafting of the legislation to its implementation may be prolonged, but legislators should strive to make the policy come in action within the next five years.

Key Facts

- In 2013, it is estimated that 47% of U.S. workers have a high probability of seeing their jobs automated over the next 20 years.^[12]
- In 2018, 40% of the American employment only happens in four criteria that can be easily replaced by currently existing technology: office and administrative support, sales, food preparation and serving, and transportation and material moving.^[13]
- Google is worth \$370 billion but has only about 55,000 employees – less than a tenth the size of AT&T’s workforce in its heyday in the 1960s.^[14]

Talking Points

- Although common understanding states that technology creates jobs, evidence suggests that compared to the jobs destroyed, only better but fewer jobs are created.^[7]
- Automation resulting from modern technology could replace jobs requiring mental labor, which are jobs that survived the previous wave of automation.
- Taxation based on the amount of automation that a company uses allows the government to redistribute the extra capital brought by modern automation, letting the economy enjoy the benefits of automation in a more equitable manner.

Action Plan Snapshot

Legislators must gain support from workers and unions to push against the potential strong objections. Since this policy aligns with the interests of most of the workers and non-high-income families, the legislation will gain major public support insofar as the public is well-informed about the impact that mass automation has on the market. Two major actions shall be taken to increase public awareness of the policy. First, unions should start putting the issue of modern automation on their agenda as a part of workers' rights protection and explain how automation may lead to mass unemployment unless additional training and access to education is provided for those whose jobs

are replaced by technology. Second, organizations and interest groups shall increase the publicity of the issue through creating discussions using media as a resource. It is crucial to recognize the fact that although there are many other imminent policy issues present, some attention must be given to modern automation, because once the harm on employment becomes large scale and damage control becomes necessary, taking actions may already be too late for the economy and workers who suffer from unemployment.

It is also important for companies to realize that since mass automation reshapes the labor market such that many specific types of labor might be in high demand, the market is not likely to deliver if no sufficient training or education is provided for workers. Through supporting unemployment insurance and social security programs, companies indirectly invest in the training of workers, which benefits them in the long run since more skilled labor will provide productivity with higher quality. Once companies understand the long-term impact of the legislation, it is likely that the policy will face less objection and thus be implemented more efficiently.

Month 1-12

Introducing the policy idea to labor unions and the public to gather interests

Month 13-24

Start organizing unions and interest groups to lobby for the policy

Month 25-30

Supportive legislators work with the FCC to start drafting the legislation while the public continues exerting pressure on the general legislature

Month 31-42

Redraft the legislation if needed and negotiate with objecting parties to push for the passing of the policy in Congress

Month 43

Begin implementation of the policy

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Foreign Policy

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Christopher Cho is a senior in the College of Arts and Sciences. He is majoring in Government, and pursuing minors in Business and Law & Society. He has been a member of the Roosevelt Institute since 2014, and is also involved in Pi Sigma Alpha, the political science honor society; the Phi Alpha Delta pre-law fraternity; and the Cornell International Affairs Review. He intends to apply to law school after graduating from Cornell.

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Jack Carlos Mindich is a freshman in the College of Arts and Sciences planning to major in Government. He is especially focused on American foreign policy in the Middle East and the American judicial system. This is his second semester with Roosevelt and his first as Center Director. In addition to heading the Foreign Policy Center for Roosevelt, he is an analyst and editor for the Cornell International Affairs Review and has worked for the Center for Court Innovation, a criminal justice nonprofit in New York City, for the past two summers.

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Born and raised in Islamabad, Pakistan, Hassaan Bin Sabir is a freshman in the College of Arts and Sciences who hopes to major in both Government and History with a minor in Arabic. Apart from the Roosevelt Institute, Hassaan serves as an Ambassador for his college, is a member of the Cornell Political Union and a fellow of Polis, a pre-professional fraternity for students interested in careers in government. His policy interests center on South Asia, the Middle East and developing nations in general. Interested in practicing Human Rights and Constitutional Law in his homeland, Hassaan aspires to actively reform these systems of government by eventually entering active politics.

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Evan is a sophomore studying Policy Analysis and Management. On campus, she is involved in the Society for Women in Business, Slope Media, and her social sorority Alpha Phi. This summer she will be serving as a Global Policy and International Public Affairs Intern at Pfizer.

Eric Lee

Eric Lee is a rising sophomore in the School of Industrial and Labor Relations at Cornell with minors in International Relations and History. As an analyst in the foreign policy center at the Roosevelt Institute, he is particularly interested in the geopolitics of East Asia and Europe. Eric is headed to Renmin University this summer to study Mandarin and Chinese energy policy for a month. He enjoys long walks on the beach and a nice nap once in a while.

Aneil Gill

Aneil Gill is a sophomore in the College of Arts and Sciences, intending to major in Government and History with a minor in Policy Analysis and Management. In addition to his work with the Roosevelt Institute, Aneil also contributes to various clubs and publications on campus, including UNA-USA, the Cornell International Affairs Observer, and The First Amendment. He hopes to explore the field of policy analysis further as he has a strong interest in both foreign and domestic policy.

Kevin Zong

Kevin Zong is a government major and public policy minor from Charlottesville, Virginia in Cornell's Class of 2021. He is passionate about education reform, criminal justice, and international relations. On campus, he is also a member of Pi Lambda Sigma (POLIS), a pre-professional government fraternity, Asian-American Intersivity, and the Assorted Aces dance group. For the summer, Kevin plans on interning with the University of Virginia Center for Politics and hopes to work in policy analysis for think tanks and eventually serve as Chief of Staff. In his free time, Kevin spends his time cooking, playing sports, and relaxing and dancing with friends.

America's War in Afghanistan: Searching for Light at the of the Tunnel

By Hassan Bin Sabir, hb362@cornell.edu

An increase in troop numbers is not the answer to the stalemate in Afghanistan. It is in American and Afghan interests for the war to come to a swift and peaceful end. To accomplish this, negotiations with the Taliban are the best available choice in conjunction with a renewed focus on reforming the Afghan state.

Background

In August 2017, President Trump announced his administration's strategy for winning the War in Afghanistan. The Trump administration was faced with three options: a complete U.S. military withdrawal from the country where America has had a military presence since 2001, a limited combat operation geared towards counter-terrorism and Afghan capacity-building, or an increase in troop numbers as well as an escalation of a war which had no end in sight.^[1] Of these, President Trump chose to go with the third choice, committing a greater – unspecified – number of U.S. troops to the country. While President Trump sought to stress the point that his strategy was in stark contrast to that of his predecessor, President Obama, the reality is that the Trump administration is doing exactly what the Obama administration tried and failed to do. The fatal flaw in Trump's strategy is that by focusing solely on another military build-up in

Afghanistan, the U.S. is deemphasizing the need to focus on the political aspects of instability in Afghanistan: deep-seated systematic issues of poor governance and corruption as well as a lack of political institutions and processes that foster stability.^[2]

Policy Idea

American interests in Afghanistan are better served by seeking a political, rather than military, solution to the conflict. A swathe of U.S. and Afghan leaders, as well as regional experts believe that the war cannot be one by military force. Instead, efforts need to be redirected towards a peace process that involves the Afghan and U.S. governments, the Taliban, and regional stakeholders such as Pakistan^[3]. Doing so would present its own set of challenges, but these are far less costly and insurmountable compared to seeking an outright military victory. In conjunction with this, there needs to be an emphasis on strengthening Afghan political institutions, areas

in which both public and private U.S. actors can play an integral role going forward.

Policy Analysis

Negotiations with the Taliban have been a focus of considerable criticism both within the U.S. and abroad. However, this policy proposal builds around the central argument that negotiations are the most realistic end to the war and that the current climate presents the right time to pursue a political settlement.

Critics of dialogue argue that the Taliban have repeatedly rejected the idea of negotiating with both the Afghan government and the U.S. In recent years, however, there has been a shift in that tone, with the Taliban increasingly espousing more moderate beliefs and displaying a willingness to consider a peaceful culmination to the war. Taliban leader Haibat Akhundzada's Eid statement, for instance, incorporated Quranic justification for talks and stressed

on the need for a peaceful resolution.^[4]

Other arguments against negotiations center on weakening the Taliban in the battlefield to gain the upper hand in talks. This displays a fundamental lack of understanding about the history of the war and the nature of the opponent. At the height of combat operations, in 2010-11, around 140,000 foreign troops were engaged in battle with the Taliban. Despite this, the Taliban were not forced into a surrender or talks at the time. This leads to the conclusion that a few thousand additional troops will not be able to bring an end to the current stalemate. That fact is reason enough to capitalize on the Taliban's conciliatory tone and seek a resolution to the conflict.^[5]

The U.S. invaded Afghanistan with the objective to defeat Al-Qaeda, capture or kill Osama Bin Laden and take on the Taliban for harboring Al-Qaeda. Those objectives have now been achieved: Al-Qaeda is a shadow of its former self, Bin Laden is dead, and the Taliban seem to have dissociated from their more extreme tendencies. However, rather than declaring victory, the U.S. has now shifted its focus towards nation-building endeavors. The key concern is that additional troops with little to no knowledge of the socio-political and historical complexities of the region are not the most equipped to accomplish the vague objective of nation-building. This can only be done through emphasizing governmental

and structural reforms in Afghanistan that result in greater trust in the Afghan political system. Experts suited for that endeavor are not present within the U.S. military. Instead, the U.S. and Afghan civilian leadership is best equipped to aid this process while the military's sole focus should be on developing Afghan combat capabilities.

The most pressing argument in favor of seeking a swift and peaceful end to the war is the terrible humanitarian toll of the conflict. In the last year alone, around 3,500 civilians were killed and nearly 8,000 wounded.^[6] The U.S. itself has lost close to 2,400 troops in the war.^[7] The economic costs, both for the U.S. and Afghanistan, have been immense. The U.S. has spent nearly \$1 trillion on the war so far, second only to its spending in World War II and, despite this, as of 2016, the Taliban influence or control more than 13 percent of Afghanistan's 407 districts and contest another 30 percent.^[8] For some Afghans, the Taliban are preferable to the national government as they offer justice without widespread corruption. This assessment is supported by The World Justice Project's 2016 Rule of Law Index which ranked Afghanistan 111 of 113 countries assessed^[9] and the United Nations Human Development Index which ranks Afghanistan near the bottom in most categories. Facts such as these only serve to highlight the need to strengthen the Afghan people's trust in their own institutions and to

focus on instituting widespread reform in the country rather than escalating the war.

Next Steps

For these reasons, it is imperative that the U.S. shift its focus towards formulating a cohesive strategy for dialogue with the Taliban. This needs to happen in conjunction with a willingness to identify key areas for reform within Afghanistan.

For negotiations, the U.S. must leverage support from regional stakeholders such as Pakistan that hold considerable influence over the Taliban. Pakistan can serve as a mediator to lay the platform for face-to-face talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government, removing any fears that the Taliban might harbor about the process. Initiatives such as allowing the Taliban to establish political offices may also help foster confidence and bring moderate factions into the political fold. A smaller military presence can focus its efforts towards training Afghan military personnel and engaging in combat with more extreme terrorist factions. With respect to initiating reform, the U.S. should call on regional experts from academia as well as organizations such as the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the Afghan Relief Organization and others with knowledge of the region to identify the way in which this process can go forward. Establishing special task-forces and advisory committees is another possible consideration.

Key Facts

- The U.S. has spent close to \$1 trillion on the War in Afghanistan, which began in 2001.
- As of August 2016, the Taliban control more than 13 percent of Afghanistan's 407 districts and contest another 30 percent.^[10]
- The U.S. has lost over 2,400 troops to the war, while the civilian fatalities in the past year alone have numbered around 3,500, with nearly 8,000 wounded.^[11,12]

Talking Points

- The U.S. entered Afghanistan to break the alliance between the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, defeat the latter, and kill Osama Bin Laden; it has achieved these objectives and now seems to have shifted its objectives towards nation-building activities.
- An increased troop presence will not aid nation-building as military personnel with no knowledge of the complex socio-political and historical practices of the region cannot aid its development.
- There is an urgent need for a political solution that looks to engage the Taliban in a peace process with a view to end the war peacefully and swiftly.
- This peace process must coincide with focused long-term efforts by the U.S. Government and private actors to restore the confidence of the Afghan people in the state through widespread reforms, and

institution-building, facilitating an environment for longstanding peace and stability that will benefit the region and the U.S.

Action Plan Snapshot

- The constitution of exchange programs by universities such as Cornell that allow talented Afghan students to benefit from the U.S. education system and apply their newly gained knowledge to Afghanistan. Service trips to Afghanistan led by Cornell students during breaks would allow the University to contribute to Afghan development.
- Engagement with NGOs that are currently working in Afghanistan such as the Afghan Relief Organization, REACH, the Global Partnership for Afghanistan (GPFA), and others to identify the key areas for reform within Afghanistan and to develop timetables and strategies for implementing these reforms.
- The establishment of special task-forces and advisory councils by the U.S. government comprising of representatives from NGOs, academia and the Afghan government to oversee both the peace process and reforms in sectors such as health, education, refugee reintegration and justice.
- Gathering support for an end to the war across college campuses through a sustained effort by on-campus political organizations that is geared towards

organizing rallies and other means of exerting pressure on decision makers in Washington.

- Lobbying local representatives to raise the issue in Congress and press for a shift in U.S. policy with respect to Afghanistan and highlight the merits of a sustained effort aimed towards seeking a peaceful political settlement with the Taliban.

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Embassy Movement Could Have Dire Effects

By Evan Johnson, eej32@cornell.edu

Both Palestine and Israel claim Jerusalem as their capital. Donald Trump intends to move the US embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, effectively legitimizing Israel's claim and delegitimizing Palestines over Jerusalem. This would cause the United States to lose its power as a mediator between Palestine and Jerusalem, and escalate conflict within the middle east.

Background

Both Jews and Arab Muslims claim the territory Israel resides on as their homeland. Jewish Israelis claim they have a right to the land based on a promise from God, and because they needed a safe haven from persecution toward the Jewish people. The Palestinian Arabs claim that they are the rightful inhabitants of the land because their ancestors have resided there for hundreds of years ^[1]. In November 1947, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a plan to partition Palestine, then under British mandate, into Arab and Jewish states ^[2]. This resulted in two wars (1948 and 1967), both of which caused the displacement of more than a million Palestinians (750,000 and 500,000, respectively) and subsequently caused a humanitarian crisis ^[2]. This humanitarian crisis still exists today; the health conditions of those who live in the refugee camps are deteriorating as conditions are often overcrowded,

with poor sanitation. There are high levels of unemployment, and rising levels of diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease and cancer within these camps^[2]. Millions wait for the opportunity to return home.

The 1967 war left the Gaza strip and the West Bank under Israeli control, despite the fact they have predominantly Palestinian populations. After the 1967 war, successive Israeli governments began building Jewish settlements on the newly occupied land, an action denounced by the international community and declared illegal by the U.N. Security Council and the International Court of Justice ^[2]. This led to two different uprisings, called intifadas, which culminated in 2003 when Israel made a unilateral decision to dismantle all Jewish settlements in Gaza and some settlements in the West Bank causing around 8,000 settlers to be evicted from Gaza and 500 settlers to be evicted from the West Bank by the Israeli army ^[2]. After years of

internal fighting between the Hamas and the Fatah, Palestine is controlled by a US backed unity government made up of both Hamas and Fatah forces. Israel refuses to recognize any government which Hamas is a part of due to Hamas lead attacks on Israel ^[2].

Jerusalem straddles the border between Israel and the West Bank and is regarded as the holiest place for both Judaism and for Islam. Both Israel and Palestine want to claim it as their capital. Israel annexed East Jerusalem and has declared it its capital which, until Trump's commentary, no other country has recognized ^[3]. The US had previously not recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital the US believed that a formal announcement could cause violence and would undermine the US position as a mediator between the Israelis and Palestinians. The rest of the world, while acknowledging Israel, disapproves of its treatment of Palestine,

specifically with its settlements in the West Bank ^[3].

Policy Idea

Trump wants to move the US Israeli Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

Policy Analysis

The primary problem with implementing this policy would be the externality on the Arab community and on Palestinian-US relations. Leaders and diplomats across the Middle East have predicted that implementation of this policy might embolden extremists, cause war and further conflict, and ruin peace negotiations as well as the possibility of a two state solution ^[4]. These predictions are partially based on commentary by the Palestinian Authority's president, Mahmoud Abbas, who reportedly said that relocating the embassy would cause dangerous consequences for the peace process and to the peace, security, and stability of the region and of the world ^[2]. He has also hinted that recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital would cause the Palestinian Authority to cut off ties with the US ^[4].

Officials from Jordan, Egypt, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and France have warned against the policy stating that it would trigger anger and fuel tensions across the Arab and Muslim world ^[4]. The Hamas, the Gaza-based Palestinian group deemed a terrorist organization by the US, has threatened a new intifada in

response to the policy ^[4]. This could put the local people in Israel and in Palestine at risk; thousands of people died in the last intifada. This would also put the US diplomats within the region at risk. Between 1987 and 2013, there was about 500 attacks against U.S. diplomatic facilities ^[5]. This embassy would be specifically at risk as it would be a symbolic target. Much of the Arab and Islamic anger because of this policy would be directed at the U.S. and the new embassy would be probably the target of any Islamic extremist groups.

The implementation of the policy would be very difficult to achieve, primarily because of many implicit, explicit, and symbolic costs. Finding a physical location within Jerusalem would be the first issue to overcome; finding a plot of land large enough for the embassy with enough room for defenses within Jerusalem that does not disturb both Muslim and Jewish religious sites would be exceedingly difficult. The building itself would be extremely expensive, not only for aesthetic and amenities reasons, but also for defense reasons. All embassies must be equipped with security measures that cost upwards of "hundreds of millions of dollars and take years to complete." ^[5] These costs ensure that there is physical, technical, and procedural security. Physical security would encompass the securing of nearby roads, the presence of armed personnel, and

a likely network of blast-proof doors and windows ^[5]. Technical security includes all the things necessary to detect assailants; this includes things like security cameras, sensors and infrared beams guarding the premises ^[5]. Procedural security means that everyone who works within or on the new embassy must be vetted, a process which could take years ^[5]. The new US embassy in London is projected to cost more than \$1 billion, and has been under construction for more than three years ^[5]. This policy is likely to be much more expensive and to take longer to implement.

The benefits to implementing this policy is that it would embolden Israel, one of the U.S.'s strongest allies, and the only western style democracy, within the Middle East. The U.S. viewed Israel as a key buffer to Soviet influence in the Middle East and shares the common goal of fighting jihadism ^[3]. Recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital would cement the U.S.'s alliance with them.

Next Steps

This policy should not be implemented as the potential costs heavily outweigh the expected benefits. While some of the damage is already done to U.S.-Palestine relations, as Trump has formally recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital, he should not move forward with the implementation of the policy as it would further harm the US-Palestinian relations, anger the

Arab community, and be exceptionally expensive in monetary costs and potentially in the cost of human life. Moving forward, Trump can abandon the policy and keep the embassy in Tel Aviv. This would allow him to keep the Israelites happy as he has recognized their capital and legitimized their claim to Jerusalem without spending excess amounts of money and putting U.S. personnel in danger. If he did not move the embassy, there is a chance of salvaging the U.S.'s relations with Palestine. If the President believes that action must commence, he could move the embassy to West Jerusalem. West Jerusalem is the seat of the Israeli government [6]. However, Palestinians view East Jerusalem as their future capital [6]. By moving the embassy to West Jerusalem, Trump does not constitute recognition of Israel's sovereignty over East Jerusalem.

Key Facts

- There were almost 500 attacks against U.S. diplomatic facilities between 1987 and 2013 [5].
- Projected costs will be far upwards of 1 billion [7].
- Palestinian Authority president Mahmoud Abbas has stated that this the policy

could have dangerous consequences and could lead to the Palestinian Authority breaking off ties with the U.S [4].

Talking Points

- Implementation of this policy might embolden extremists, cause war and further conflict, and ruin peace negotiations as well as the possibility of a 2 state solution.
- The implementation of the policy would be very difficult to achieve, primarily because of many implicit, explicit, and symbolic costs.
- Focus should be put on the humanitarian crisis at hand in the refugee camps.

Action Plan Snapshot

There are many non-profit organizations that are working for peace in Gaza and Palestine. A list of them can be found here;

<https://nonprofitquarterly.org/2014/08/07/ngos-indomitably-at-work-for-peace-in-gaza-and-palestine/>

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NSLI-Y: Expanding America’s Student Foreign Exchange Initiatives

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By expanding the State Department-funded National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLI-Y) to middle school students, we can encourage intercultural and international exchange among our youth and develop their ability to effectively engage and interact with other cultures and peoples.

Background

In 2016, the number of Chinese nationals studying in the U.S. as college students topped a whopping 329,000.^[1] This is not even including the additional hundreds of thousands that came for primary and secondary school and those on educational exchanges each year. In comparison, only 1.6 percent of Americans enrolled in institutions of higher education went overseas for study abroad.^[2] Moreover, major foreign languages other than Spanish are not taught enough at secondary schools in the United States. According to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and American Councils for International Education, the number of middle schools offering foreign languages has significantly declined from 75 percent in 1997 to 58 percent in 2008.^[3] In a world in which international interaction in key foreign languages such as Mandarin

Chinese, Korean, and Arabic will become increasingly necessary due to globalization and international exchange, the country is going to need a workforce and population that can understand the outside world and communicate in these key languages.

Therefore, it is in the interest for the U.S. government to equip youth with the tools and experiences necessary to become valuable human capital for the country and provide a wider share of talented students and children with the opportunity to raise their educational horizons. The National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLI-Y) does just this, and in opposition to recent calls by the Trump administration to cut all State Department-administered cultural exchange programs other than the Fulbright Program, we propose that NSLI-Y not only be maintained but expanded to

include middle school-aged children (10-14) as well^[4].

Policy Idea

NSLI-Y started under the Bush Administration in 2006 with the stated goal of increasing “dramatically the number of U.S. residents learning, speaking, and teaching critical-need foreign languages” such as those spoken in key countries that are strategically important to the U.S.^[5] The State Department recognized the increasing need for and continuing deficiency in the number of speakers of the key languages within the foreign service workforce. NSLI-Y, therefore, came underway with the specific target of educating more American youths to attain fluency in such languages.

The program currently sends high school-aged students abroad to their respective foreign countries for language study and cultural immersion. In an effort to further this cause, the federal

government should expand the program by creating a separate track for middle-school aged children, as earlier immersion in a foreign language allows for faster learning and increased fluency^[6].

Policy Analysis

Since 2006, NSLI-Y has received funding through the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) and is coordinated by both the Department and sponsors such as American Councils for International Education^[7]. Allocated \$8.9 million USD in fiscal year 2017, the program remains one of the key cultural exchange initiatives run at the national level by the federal government, and with an acceptance rate of 16% for the most recent year (2017-2018), it continues to send 600 high school students overseas every year.^[8,9] Languages of study are Arabic, Mandarin Chinese, Hindi, Indonesian, Korean, Persian, Russian, and Turkish, and participants in the program are sent to countries where these specific languages are spoken. Moreover, they can apply for either a summer or year-long term that last six to eight weeks and a full academic year from fall to early summer, respectively.

Under our current proposal, NSLI-Y would create a separate branch in charge of administering a middle school program with additional funding from the State Department. Additional staff will have to be

recruited to serve in the program, and the State Department, as well as its sponsor organizations, will have to spend some time developing a similar but new curriculum and framework for the program.

Such operational, logistical, and administrative problems notwithstanding, establishing a new sub-program within NSLI-Y for middle school students will be of minimal difficulty, as it will only have to follow the guidelines of the current high school program that is already in place and that has already been running for over a decade. Admittedly, considering that the program participants will be younger (between the ages of 10 and 14), administrators must make appropriate changes to accommodate such individuals by guaranteeing more rigorous supervision by program staff and a curriculum that is more fitting for such young minds.

Finally, regarding other practicality and budgetary issues, the proposed program will be more than affordable as the fiscal situation of the current high school NSLI-Y program already shows. As mentioned earlier, the entire budget for NSLI-Y in fiscal year 2017 amounted to \$8.9 million USD^[10]. As one former NSLI-Y participant wittily noted on one of his online publications, "[NSLI-Y funding] costs roughly the same as security at Trump Tower for 9 days, or a little less than 3 weekends at Mar A Lago."^[11] Assuming that we take

in as many middle school students for the new program as we already do for the current NSLI-Y high school program, the government would only be looking at a figure that will be a little more than twice as large. Granted, starting the new program will require a little bit extra at the beginning in order to get the program going from the ground up. However, costs will stabilize after the first few years.

Next Steps

When President George W. Bush started NSLI over a decade ago, his administration did so out of a tremendous need for more advanced-level speakers of foreign languages that are in critical need. Since then, the initiative has continued to produce 600 new speakers of these key tongues every year through NSLI for Youth, one of wider NSLI's constituent programs. If the current administration goes through with plans to systemically cut and eliminate NSLI, the only way Americans will be able to learn critical languages through federal government-run programs will either be through the military or the Fulbright program.¹² In no way will this be enough to satisfy the need for speakers in these languages in a world that is increasingly interconnected and globalized.

The government should build upon what it has already put in place and allocate the necessary resources and funding

to expand NSLI-Y for even younger Americans to benefit. Not only will the program's expansion be cost-effective and barely put a dent in the federal budget but more importantly it will more successfully foster language skills in our youth, as exposure to foreign languages at a pre-adolescent age allows for faster learning and a higher likelihood for fluency.

Key Facts

- With an acceptance rate hovering around 15% each year, NSLI-Y is a very competitive program that picks out talented and promising students all over the country regardless of their economic background^[13]
- All travel and program expenses for NSLI-Y participants are covered by the program itself, and in addition, stipends are also distributed to help cover the costs of additional personal expenses^[14]
- The NSLI-Y budget for fiscal year 2017 was \$8.9 million USD^[15]
- Since 2007, NSLI-Y has produced over 7000 students that have achieved high levels of fluency in their individual languages of study^[16]
- Mandarin Chinese, Korean, Arabic, and Russian are given the most importance out of the critical languages offered by the program

Talking Points

- Although many schools, foundations, and other actors provide smaller programs in the form of exchanges and study abroad to young students interested in learning foreign languages overseas, it is imperative that there is a federally sponsored national program such as NSLI-Y that fosters growth in the number of students learning and studying key languages.
- NSLI-Y has, so far, been successful in meeting its goal of increasing exchange with other countries and the number of young Americans able to speak foreign languages of critical importance.
- A NSLI-Y program for middle school students will allow further exchange with the wider world and provide greater educational opportunities for our children.

Action Plan Snapshot

The Bush Administration developed and started NSLI after calls by the country's major educational foundations, universities, scholars, and State Department officials for investment in and attention to an area of education and study that was underdeveloped in the U.S. Although NSLI-Y in its current form along with its other related programs has been successful in developing Americans' abilities in critical languages, more can and has to be done. Therefore, with help and support from

leading groups that support foreign language education and international exchange programs such as *American Councils for International Education*, there can be a successful lobbying effort for Congress to pass the NSLI-Y expansion. As the current NSLI-Y program took almost a year to develop and start from 2006 to 2007, it is wise to provide as much time for the proposed expansion as well. Moreover, adding the expansion to the upcoming 2019 U.S. federal budget will be an adequate goal.

At the level of the school, Cornell University, much like other top institutions of higher education, is helping to send more American students abroad for language immersion and acquisition through study abroad programs like Cornell Abroad. However, with regard to the issue at hand, the Roosevelt Institute can help support the proposed expansion by encouraging the various professors in these foreign languages to present research demonstrating the benefits of federal foreign language acquisition programs like NSLI-Y. Such research can later be used by lobbying groups as evidence in favor of the expansion.

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Accountable Allies: The Argument for Decreasing Military Aid to Saudi Arabia

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Although the US and Saudi Arabia have a long history of cooperation, it is vital that the US confront the Middle Eastern power over its destabilizing actions in the region and human rights violations. Cutting military aid in the form of renegeing on a recent arms deal as well as other restrictions on aid for destabilizing or inhumane actions is a necessary step to hold the regional ally accountable and reassert US moral leadership.

Background:

Diplomatic cooperation between Saudi Arabia and the United States has been centered on the exchange of oil and regional security interests. The relationship began in the 1930s, when US businesses began to drill for oil in Saudi Arabia.^[1] Over the following decades, the two nations maintained strong economic ties, as the US became more reliant on foreign oil to meet domestic needs. Even after the Saudi government nationalized the oil industry in the 1970s, the economic partnership between the two nations persisted and continues today. While Saudi Arabia had always played an important role in supporting US policy in the Middle East, its status as a key regional ally would develop further after the 1979 Iranian Revolution cut off American diplomatic relations with Iran.^[2] Importantly, Iran has historically been viewed as a major regional rival of Saudi Arabia, both because of its political and economic force and its role as the

largest Shi'ite nation in opposition of Sunni leadership in Saudi Arabia.^[3] Relations between the US and Saudi Arabia have faced challenges during the ongoing conflict against terrorist groups in the region, as many have accused Saudi government officials of funding terrorist organizations and promoting extremist ideologies.^[4] Additionally, Saudi assertions of power in the Middle East have destabilized the region by heightening Saudi tensions with Iran and other powers. In recent months, a power shift within the Saudi government has further destabilized the nation, with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman moving to coalesce his power by uprooting establishment leaders.^[5] Even amidst these challenges and a waning American dependence on foreign oil, both nations remain closely linked in military operations against ISIS in Iraq and in the Yemeni Civil War. Recent military aid deals, involving billions of dollar worth of weapons and

resources have reaffirmed close ties between the two nations.

Policy Idea:

The United States must renege on the remainder of the recent 10-year, \$350 billion aid agreement^[6] over human rights concerns and impose a policy of regulated and decreased aid for Saudi military operations. This will involve fewer commitments in weapons and other resources provided to the Saudi military. Any aid provided should be granted under the premise that the Saudi military will abide by international law in operations that utilize the given resources.

Policy Analysis:

Decreased military funding to Saudi Arabia would have a discernible effect on regional conflicts and American policy abroad. As noted by the Council on Foreign Relations, Saudi Arabia purchased 9.7% of US weapons exports between 2011 and 2015,

making it the largest importer of US weapons over that span.^[7] Both President Obama and President Trump have agreed to large arms deals with the nation, providing \$1.15 billion worth of equipment in 2016^[8] and agreeing to a long term \$350 billion commitment that granted \$110 billion in weapons immediately in 2017^[9]. These funds have been useful in expanding Saudi military presence in the region, notably in Yemen, where Saudi involvement in the ongoing civil war has been subject to accusations of human rights and international law violations. Since 2015, nearly 10,000 people have died and over 50,000 people have been injured as part of the conflict, with civilian casualties accounting for more than half of the deaths^[10]. American funding has played a direct role in the atrocities and civilian deaths in Yemen. Human Rights Watch found in 2016 that remnants of American weapons were present at the sites of 23 unlawful airstrikes carried out by the Saudi coalition^[11]. Airstrikes by the Saudi-led coalition have been deemed the leading cause of death and damage during the war. Additionally, a coalition enforced blockade has restricted access to important resources for survival and recovery in many areas of the country^[12]. Clear evidence has been presented that links American weapons agreements and military aid to Saudi Arabia to wartime atrocities in Yemen that are in violation of international law. American military support has served to replenish Saudi resources

in its campaign, therefore a dramatic cut in aid would alter Saudi capabilities and hamper future operations.

In addition to obstructing Saudi war crimes in Yemen, a slash in funding would hold the ally accountable for various other destabilizing actions and violations of human rights. Historically, the Saudi government has been accused of supporting or tolerating extremist groups. Although the nation has contributed to counterterrorism operations and efforts in the region, many citizens have continued to fund extremist groups such as Al Qaeda^[13]. Many have noted that 15 of the 19 hijackers involved in the 9/11 attacks were Saudi and believe that reports regarding funding for the attacks have remained classified as an attempt to protect Saudi officials who may have been involved^[14]. Furthermore, Saudi officials have continued to uphold laws and practices which are antithetical to principles of human rights. For example, only a few days after the Charlie Hebdo in France, a Saudi blogger was sentenced to 10 years in prison for “insulting Islam” and his representing lawyer was later sentenced to 15 years in prison for challenging royal authority^[15]. Such limitations on speech and expression are against the ideals American foreign policy looks to promote and mirror extremist ideologies utilized by groups many would consider to be anti-American. Finally, in light of Saudi rivalry with Iran, largely stemming from either power’s role as

sectarian leaders^[16], it would be beneficial to avoid the appearance of favoring one sect (Sunni) over the other (Shi’ite), especially as diplomatic relations with Iran are being rebuilt. Many of the destabilizing actions perpetrated by Saudis can be attributed to this rivalry, as the nation looks to establish regional supremacy. With recent power shifts in the Saudi government, it is difficult to project the nation as a stabilizing force in the region^[17]. Overall, a policy of decreased military aid would effectively hold Saudi Arabia accountable for atrocities committed while also hindering future destabilizing action.

Next Steps

Local and national advocacy groups ought to support this policy as a measure of responsible international leadership and a correction of mistakes previously committed. Local groups and enterprises should commit to restricting funding of Saudi interests by pinpointing areas of funding that may come from Saudi sources (Saudi donations or investments in Cornell Tech development for instance). Individuals and groups must spread awareness of the atrocities in Yemen and further examine the role that Saudi Arabia plays in Middle Eastern conflicts. Contacting federal representatives would also serve to bring attention to the issue and inspire action by those in leadership positions. Overall, it is up to groups to spread awareness and open discourse on the merits of

American military aid to Saudi Arabia.

Key Facts

- Saudi Arabia was the largest importer of American weapons between 2011 and 2015, accounting for 9.7% of sales^[18]
- Since the beginning of the Yemeni Civil War in 2015, nearly 10,000 Yemenis have died, half of whom were civilians^[19]
- As of 2016, US weapons had been found at the site of 23 potentially illegal airstrikes carried out by coalition forces^[20]
- In 2017, the two nations agreed to a 10 year arms deal worth \$350 billion, with \$110 billion worth of equipment provided immediately^[21]

Talking Points

- US military aid to Saudi Arabia has been used to commit various atrocities and war crimes in Yemen, continuing a trend of destabilizing actions without regard for international law and human rights on behalf of the Saudi leadership
- Saudi leadership has promoted and propagated extremist ideologies that are not conducive to a health relationship with the US
- In light of regional rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia as a microcosm of sectarian tension, it would be wise to appear willing to work with both sides and hold either party accountable for illegal action

- This policy holds Saudi leadership accountable for immoral and dangerous actions, obstructs continued atrocities in Yemen, and moves to stabilize the region

Action Plan Snapshot

Students must engage in campus-wide discussion about the conflict in Yemen and the merits of American military aid going to Saudi Arabia in light of the facts presented above. Educational campaigns, guest lectures, and humanitarian aid fundraisers would all serve to spread awareness. Students must also advocate for Cornell administration to cut ties with the Saudi government in receiving donations or providing funds for research. Off campus, individuals may contact their representatives in Congress to push for a reconsideration of Saudi aid, with a special focus on members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. There are many organizations and leaders who would partner with the movement to cut Saudi military aid, as many, including former President Barack Obama and Senator Chris Murphy, have voiced concerns about the merits of the status quo. A media campaign must encompass the extent of suffering in Yemen and include the support of leaders who stand against continued military aid to Saudi Arabia. Within the next six months, it would be reasonable to expect increased campus discussion on the topic and the beginning of

progress with governmental leaders regarding legislative options.

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Learning from Cornell's GHP Initiative to Make Progress in Chinese Pollution

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The Chinese government would be well-advised to learn from Cornell University's policy model to invest in geothermal heat pumps to make significant progress in China's attempts to reduce pollution levels in all forms.

Background

In the 1970s, as China rapidly grew in manufacturing markets, environmental impacts were the last thing on the Chinese government's minds. However, due to intense and prolonged neglect, in 2007, China surpassed the U.S. to become the world's greatest contributor of pollution, pushing out approximately 27% of the world's pollution each year^[1].

Approximately 1.2 million, or 17% of deaths every year in China are attributed to toxic pollutants in the environment. While these findings have come to light, it has been extremely difficult to obtain specific data on the extent of environmental disaster in China due to its secretive nature. However, one thing that has been guaranteed is that air and water pollution has become a widespread epidemic. The root of the issue lies in late Chinese Premier Deng Xiaoping – the steward of China's economic and political model – and his blatant disregard of environmental concerns the U.N. raised in 1972 in pursuit of economic

modernization^[2]. Further compounding basic pollution issues was Deng's method of diffused authority, creating township and village enterprises (TVEs), granting further autonomy to local governments and subsequently corporations, preventing effective policy implementation beyond large cities.^[3] Deng Xiaoping's premiership followed directly after Mao Zedong, and has subsequently written many of the rules of the Chinese Communist Party for the past 40 years or so. As a result, China has immense all-around pollution, particularly in water contamination and soil degradation, to the point where it may be as or more dangerous as the air pollution we are so familiar with.^[4] The elimination of coal is critical to curbing China's pollution problem, and the government is well on its way after capping industrial carbon emissions in large industrial cities like Beijing and Shanghai and setting emission reduction goals in Five-Year Plans (FYP).^[5] Yet this will not solve the issue in whole, as China continues to face challenges

in enforcing limitations outside of major cities, while Chinese pollution continues to be the cause of one-third of deaths in China.^[6] Even so, there may be an opportunity for China to make significant progress in the War on Pollution.

Policy Idea

China already has several shorter-term policies in place for the immediate clampdown on carbon emissions. In order to have long-term sustainability, China should look into an initiative developed in the U.S.: Geothermal Heat Pumps (GHP), something China can look to Cornell's Earth Source Heat program to draw inspiration from. This is not saying GHP will solve all of China's environmental issues; however, it has the potential to support clean energy infrastructure to an unprecedented point. Looking to Cornell's GHP project, we see that it too, is not expecting this new source of geothermal energy to power the entire campus – rather, GHP will serve to replace usage of fossil fuels and combine with other

green energy solutions to create a zero-emission environment. Thus, China can accomplish a similar goal by following in Cornell's footsteps. In order to accomplish this, China will need to continue investing in infrastructure that is flexible enough to accommodate the grueling and varied terrain. Doing so will create an inclusive solution for China to cut down on pollution in all areas of the country, and thus helping reach emission reduction goals at a faster rate.

Policy Analysis

Cornell University has created a zero-emission plan for its campus, with a target goal of accomplishing this by 2035. Within the plan is an Earth Source Heat system, known more formally as a Geothermal Heat Pump, is a heat well drilled into the ground that draws heat from deep within Earth's crust to heat the campus, which is balanced by cooling from Cayuga Lake in a continuous cycle.^[7] GHPs are an internally-repetitive heating and cooling system that uses Earth's natural internal heat, therefore doing no harm to the environment. It is also important to note that GHPs are not dependent on large bodies of water for cooling, although it is certainly a system that works. A common misconception is that the pump requires cooling – this is not true. The only use of a cooling system is to cool the air as it cycles throughout the system, allowing it to both cool and heat rooms (like a real HVAC system). This can be done in a closed system by proximity to cool water, but also

done in an open system, utilizing the environment.

China has looked to implement the core basic renewable energies: solar, wind, and hydroelectric; however, China's climate vastly varies, making it extremely difficult to introduce widespread policies that focus on one of these renewable energies.^[8] In response, the Chinese government actually has already begun research into geothermal heat pump systems, and experimentally implemented them during the 2008 Beijing Olympics.^[9] The excitement for GHP is palpable in China, as many companies have been started to pursue this new technology. However, China is currently struggling to move GHP to a larger city and national scale.^[10]

The current challenge is GHP is typically used in residential houses; rarely have GHP systems been able to distribute airflow to large commercial buildings or communities. Cornell's Earth Source Heat initiative is groundbreaking in this sense – if successful it would adequately heat 745 acres of buildings rather than just several thousand square feet.^[11] Cornell's system digs heat wells close to two miles into the ground, far deeper than typical small-scale residential heating systems. When connected to Cornell University's existing energy distribution system, the extra depth exposes the GHP system to enough geothermal heat to carry throughout the entire campus.^[12] This new system provides the answer to the main conflict that has prevented a

widespread implementation of GHP in China. Without this new technology, it would have been impossible to heat the massive skyscrapers in large industrial cities and would be terribly inefficient to install in hard-to-reach rural areas if each house had to have an individually drilled heat well. By digging deeper wells, China can make GHP cost-efficient enough to be installed.

Another issue GHP faces in China is the drilling itself. If it is necessary to drill deeper to heat larger areas on the surface, it is critical to guarantee the ground is safe to drill into. In most large cities, this is a non-issue, as they are well-developed and mapped. However, rural areas still lack the infrastructure to guarantee the safe installment of GHPs.^[13] It will be critical for China to invest more in modernizing rural areas so that proper geological surveying can be done to ensure the safe installment of GHP systems. Connecting rural areas to a central infrastructure will also allow for easier monitoring of the GHP system to ensure safety at all times.

The final concern is the high initial cost. Pumps alone can be upwards of several million dollars, not including the cost to drill such a deep hole and maintain the system^[14]. This may make it a very unattractive option, but after several years of operation, GHPs can save from 30-60% in energy costs, while eliminating any emission of carbon, as it is a little to no maintenance system that does not rely on energy "generation".^[15] Once a GHP is

installed, besides routine checkups, there is no secondary action necessary. With other renewable energies, there is some sort of transfer process, where the source, be it wind, sun, or water, has to power some sort of transfer, activating a generator or solar cells. This can lead to loss of energy, and therefore a less efficient, costlier system. But even without this, the complex and high-maintenance nature of all other renewable energy systems lend them to have consistently high operating costs. Following GHP, simply cutting out the complicated operations leads it to be far more cost-efficient. Furthermore, there is far lower risk of water and soil contamination using GHP, as it uses no chemicals and only taps into natural heat produced by the planet, which will help standstill the continued pollution that infiltrates China's waterways and agriculture.^[16] All in all, in terms of a long-term solution to the overuse of coal, GHP can provide economic savings as well as immense benefits to the environment.

Next Steps

Politicians, researchers, and companies in China interested in GHP should lobby the government to budget grants to allow further research to be done on China's geological structure and whether it can sustain deep well geothermal heat pump systems. If conclusive and positive evidence returns, then these groups should lobby the government to begin a large-scale infrastructure modernization project

to begin setting in place the structure to allow for large-scale GHP installation to take place. There should be little resistance given the economic boost it would provide in conjunction with the benefits of emission reductions. Meanwhile, it is important to remember GHP is likely to be effective in most of the world. If China is truly committed to leading the world in reducing emissions, as it claimed at the Paris Climate Accords, China should help facilitate research and surveying in other countries to help determine if GHP is an acceptable source of natural, renewable energy for them as well.

Key Facts

- Chinese carbon emissions, though much improved, still comprise of around a quarter of total carbon emissions in the world. Pollution in China has become so bad that China regularly issues "Red Alerts" on pollution fog.
- China has begun using industrial coal emission limitations and regulations to reduce corporate pollution, especially in Beijing.
- China has invested in rudimentary research and experimentally installed GHP systems in the grounds of the Beijing Olympics in 2008. Little residential and commercial GHP has been installed, however.

Talking Points

- Most renewable energy sources (solar, wind, hydroelectric) are not abundant enough to consistently provide energy to the entire country. The natural resources these energies depend on are also inconsistent across significant portions of China.
- Cornell's Earth Source Heat project is using deeper heat wells (2-4 miles) in order to pump higher levels of heat to distribute across greater areas on the surface. This method is one the Chinese government can adopt to make GHP possible for widespread implementation.
- This policy would be a more feasible option in that it is economically beneficial in the long run and also is an 100% emission free system.
- This strategy can be combined with other renewable energy sources to create hybrid systems in order to lessen the strain and dependency on any one energy system.

Action Plan Snapshot

Due to the larger political perspective of this policy, local campus/community outreach is less of an integral step in enacting such a policy, especially as it is in a foreign country. However, Cornell has already done extensive research and made critical technological advancements in developing a zero-emission GHP system for the entire

campus. Perhaps by advocating a sharing of information or collaboration with other researchers abroad, the local Cornell community can become involved in a larger end-goal.

The future of this plan is in the Chinese government's hands. Researchers must petition the Communist Party to invest significant money in the furthering of research into the potential for deep-well GHP in all of China, as well as present data as to the environmental and economic benefits of this system. Companies that have been launched within China to begin construction for geothermal energy pump systems should coordinate with the government to discuss the infrastructure requirements and regulations that should exist to ensure the safety of GHP at all times. In order to accomplish this all, it will be critical to have key energy officials, party officials, researchers, and construction companies together to create a coalition that will see to the safe and successful implementation of geothermal energy.

Within the next six months, hopefully the Chinese government will have allowed researchers to adequately survey China's ground and ensured the safety of deep-drilling, which will lead to the beginning of infrastructure implementation and the beginning of drafting plans to create widespread geothermal heating pump systems throughout the entire country.

The Chinese Communist Party and Xi Jinping have trumpeted the "War on Pollution" and prioritized healthier living in the country. If they wish to continue in this path and fulfill their expectations, they would be well-advised to lean into the contributions of geothermal heating.

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Healthcare Policy

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Improving Eating Disorder Therapy: Incentivizing Motivational Treatment Innovation

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Stagnation in eating disorder rates in the last several decades suggests a need for improved treatment strategies. At the heart of failed eating disorder recovery is the issue of ambivalence; this psychological barrier to healing is rooted in a lack of motivation to change. Providing grant funding for eligible institutions (such as federally-qualified health clinics, private practices, and treatment centers) to implement modern motivational therapy can improve current eating disorder care. Such techniques have demonstrated success in clinical focus groups, and medical institutions can use additional monetary resources to train professionals in motivational interviewing and develop modern patient tools.

Background

Despite rapid healthcare innovation in the last half-century, eating disorder rates have increased dramatically until the 1970s and stagnated since then^[1]. Less than 13% of adolescents suffering from anorexia nervosa receive treatment; among those who do receive treatment^[2], an estimated minimum of one in five patients drop out^[3]. Lack of robust treatment strategy for these disorders is of concern for at least 30 million^[4] women and men of all races and ethnicities. The relationship between psychologists and patients is critical in effectuating recovery; the American Psychological Association asserts that “patients and psychologists must work together to explore the psychological issues underlying the eating disorder

[...]”^[5] Poor therapeutic strategies can perpetuate harmful weight-related habits and ultimately result in hospitalization, which is both expensive and challenging to secure insurance coverage. There is a general consensus that there is a serious need for greater research on developing more effective treatments, since “too few patients receive evidence-based treatment and too many receive suboptimal or inappropriate therapy.”^[6] Incentivizing innovation in eating disorder treatment is essential for developing better quality care and improved outcomes for patients.

Policy Idea

Federal or state governments will allocate a number of block grants whose purpose is to be used for

developing motivational therapy (MT) for eating disorder patients. Federally-qualified health clinics (FQHCs), private and nonprofit practices, and eating disorder treatment clinics can apply for these grants. Successful applications will include detailed allocations of grant money towards practices including, but not limited to, MT training for staff and professionals, online MT resources, and/or additional research on patient response to MT. Within eight years, grant recipients will be required to report patient outcomes and improvement plans as a result of their new MT practices.

Policy Analysis

Motivational therapy has shown moderate to significant success in various studies. A 2009 study randomly allocated

47 patients to two treatment groups, receiving either Motivational Interviewing (MI) or Treatment As Usual (TAU).^[7] There was significantly less treatment dropout in the MI condition than in the TAU condition, and more people in the MI condition indicated improvements in “readiness to change”.^[8] Similarly, a Toronto General Hospital study of MI intervention demonstrated greater likelihood to successfully complete an intensive treatment program among MI participants than those in a TAU condition.^[9] Other more elaborate studies, including a 6-month motivational interviewing program in Hong Kong, demonstrated greater retention of participants who used motivational enhancement exercises than those who did not.^[10] Participants in the motivational enhancement program also demonstrated significant improvement in motivation to abandon bingeing and excessive exercise.^[11] In a separate study, participants in an intensive, hospital-based treatment program were randomly assigned to either receive MI therapy or TAU (control). Researchers found that MI participants were significantly more likely to complete the treatment program (69% completion) than those

receiving TAU (31% completion)^[12].

It may seem that treatment time poses a serious cost; however, in the Toronto General Hospital study, participants reported the MI condition as not particularly time consuming for either therapist or participant^[13]. Furthermore, it is the intention of the proposed policy that therapeutic interventions will reduce future eating disorder hospitalizations, reducing exorbitant medical costs for life-threatening eating disorder cases. For perspective, hospitalizations for children under 12 with eating disorders rose by 119% between 1999 and 2006. Admissions for less common eating disorders increased by 38% in that same time frame^[14]. These hospitalizations can be extremely expensive; residential treatment programs, on average, cost \$30,000 a month. Follow-up care and travel expenses to specialized eating disorder treatment centers add to these costs, and insurers frequently deny coverage to affected individuals, according to Dr. Evelyn Attia, director of an eating disorders research program at the NY State Psychiatric Institute^[15].

Dr Sau Fong Leung, a professor at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University School of Nursing, suggests that the internet can act as an “e-health

tool” for providing access to motivational enhancement therapy information for those afflicted by eating disorders^[16]. Internet motivational tools appear on the rise abroad; UK researchers have developed a new web-based program (“MotivATE”) designed to improve attendance at specialist eating disorder services using motivational techniques^[17]. Well-designed web-based tools are more likely to be accessible and cost-effective, particularly for young adults.

Next Steps

Overall, motivational interviewing (MI) appears successful in both retaining therapy participation (reducing dropouts) and reducing dangerous eating and exercise behaviors. Receiving better quality treatment (e.g., motivational interviewing) at the therapeutic level can reduce likelihood of hospitalization down the road, providing a significant monetary benefit to eating disorder patients. Internet-based tools have proven successful at administering motivational recovery resources to individuals with eating disorders. These online templates can serve as models for new motivational resources.

Legislators must collaborate with mental health professionals and experienced motivational interviewers to

draft grant programs. Budget analysts, physicians, and patients should testify before legislative committees to create effective, evidence-based programs. Active recruitment of public and private healthcare providers to submit grant applications must also be a central focus. PR campaigns should be centered on potential motivational interviewing steps that can be taken with appropriate funding support, including internet intervention development and training/education opportunities for current mental health professionals.

Finally, a diverse committee of professionals, patients, and legislators must be convened to review grant applications. Ideally, applications should designate some grant money for program evaluation; after the eight-year grant period, practices should be able to determine whether MI efforts have yielded any success before grants are renewed.

Key Facts

- Individuals experiencing eating disorders overwhelmingly do not receive treatment; one study estimates less than 13% of eating disorder are treated.^[18]
- Those suffering from eating disorders experience higher rates of depression,

anxiety, and substance abuse.^[19]

- Between 20-50% of eating disorder inpatients and 30-75% of eating disorder outpatients drop out of treatment.^[20]
- Most treatment dropouts do so out of their own initiative, suggesting a lack of motivation and/or ambivalence to change.^[21]
- A positive relationship exists between high motivation to change and positive eating disorder recovery outcomes (including weight increases, continuing treatment, reduced weight pathology).^[22]

Talking Points

- Treatment aimed directly at patients' motivation to change addresses a salient barrier to recovery.
- A block grant program allows FQHCs, private and nonprofit practices, and treatment centers the necessary flexibility to design MI programs specific to their patient population.
- Grant programs, such as the Medicare Shared Savings Program (MSSP) and Comprehensive Primary Care Plus (CPC+) Program, already exist and allow providers to apply for government funding to enhance patient experience

and improve quality of care^[23, 24].

- Eating disorder rates have not decreased in the last several decades; implementation of new and innovative treatments may reduce these rates, but providers must have the necessary resources to do so.

Action Plan Snapshot

Building support for MT grant programs. Building networks among mental health professionals – particularly those who treat patients with eating disorders – is key in building a coalition of support (necessary to pass grant legislation) and pool of potential grant applicants/recipients (during grant provision). Effective organizing techniques should include one-on-one relational meetings between legislators and therapists. Top-down implementation, however, excludes patients from offering input. As such, legislators and therapists should field questions and concerns from eating disorder patients and recoverees to better understand and address patient MI needs.

Identify and establish meetings with potential key partners. These may include Project HEAL (a nonprofit providing funds to patients who cannot otherwise afford eating disorder treatment), Eating

Disorder Hope (an organization that provides informational resources to eating disorder patients and their families), National Eating Disorders Association, Eating Disorder Foundation, Academy for Eating Disorders, F.E.A.S.T. (Families Empowered and Supporting Treatment of Eating Disorders), and International Association of Eating Disorder Professionals, among others.

Public policy steps.

Legislators in favor of instituting MT grant programs should draft and work to pass a bill appropriating funds to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Administrators within DHHS should work with legislators, therapists, and patients to create block grant guidelines for MT applicants.

Communicating from a humanistic perspective. An individual is more than just his/her eating disorder. Seek individuals in disorder recovery who have benefited from MI therapy techniques to talk about their stories and experiences. These narratives, with permission from their orators, can inform and persuade legislators and providers to incorporate MI techniques to improve patient outcomes

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Eating Disorders in At-Risk Populations: Initiative to Protect Health of College-Aged Females

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Through mandatory body image training and educational awareness programs, universities can protect students from developing lifelong struggles with unhealthy eating behavior at a high-risk period of life by following similar approaches used for alcohol and drug education.

Background

Eating disorders describe illnesses that are characterized by irregular eating habits and extreme distress about body shape and/or weight ^[6]. They are caused by a variety of longstanding behavioral, biological, emotional, psychological, interpersonal, and social factors ^[2]. These disorders are most common in women, usually emerging between ages 18-21 years of age ^[1]. This age of onset is significant due to the increased psychosocial pressures of modern adolescence and newfound independence of this age group while pursuing higher education. The risk of developing an eating disorder for an adolescent female increases steadily from age 15 to 19 ^[2]. This risk is mirrored in the statistics of eating disorders reported in this cohort: data from one college over a 13 year period shows total eating disorders increased from 23 to 32% among females. The percentage of students eating according to a “special weight loss diet” increased from

4.2% in 1995 to 22% in 2008 ^[1]. These trends are concerning in that both diagnosable eating disorders are increasing alongside generally disordered and unhealthy attitudes towards food. Without treatment, eating disorders can lead to a very serious lifelong health struggle and often result in death from starvation, substance abuse, or suicide ^[1].

While it is important to note that there is also a prevalence of eating disorders and body image issues in males, females are the most at-risk population in this age group and the program recommended for use is specifically designed to target females. If the program proves successful after implementation, then it is highly recommended to be developed and expanded to include college-aged males as well.

Policy Idea

Universities should invest in a mandatory internet-based training program for female students to be completed before they arrive on

campus educating them on self-esteem, self-image, healthy eating practices, awareness of different kinds of eating disorders, resources available on campus if they believe they develop such a disorder, and how to offer support to friends struggling to establish healthy eating patterns in college.

Policy Analysis

Universities comply with policy standards to protect incoming students’ health by educating them on the dangers of binge drinking and excessive alcohol use through Internet-based programs such as AlcoholEdu. This online course has over 800 partners nationwide, and has proven to be effective in decreasing Heavy Drinking Rates on campus ^[4]. In many cases, this type of drug education is mandated by the United States Education Department under General Administrative Regulations part 86, “as a condition of receiving funds or any other form of financial assistance under any Federal

program, an institution of higher education (IHE) must certify that it has adopted and implemented a drug prevention program as described in this part”^[5]. Given that eating disorders are most likely to arise during the years students arrive at college and that they have the highest mortality rate amongst mental health disorders, it should be treated as a comparable priority in protecting student health by universities and federal government.

College-aged females are a highly susceptible population to developing eating disorders and unhealthy eating behaviors. In a study conducted at Southern Connecticut State University primarily conducted among this particular young adult age cohort, revealed distressing statistics about eating behaviors among the majority of women surveyed^[2]. Despite the acknowledged needs of this population, a national survey conducted by the National Eating Disorder Association concerning eating disorders on college campuses revealed a distinct gap in between how important campus providers consider these resources, and their actual availability on campus^[1]. There is a strong positive relationship between increased awareness and education, and individuals reaching out for support and treatment referrals, pointing to potential importance of sustained education of the student body in directing those struggling to help as a result of educational efforts provided to students by universities^[1]. While programs

targeting awareness of eating disorders through factual knowledge are very effective, there is a persistent unmet need for individuals on campus who are in a position to identify and refer students that are at risk of developing these disorders^[1].

Studies evaluating the efficacy of internet-based intervention programs modeled similarly to AlcoholEdu have shown positive results, effectively leading to sustained reductions in weight and shape concerns in college-age women who were at high risk for developing EDs^[3]. Additionally, such intervention programs have been found to improve women's body satisfaction, a potential risk factor in the development of eating disorders^[4]. These results were found after college-aged female students participated in a randomized control study of an 8-session curriculum called Student Bodies. The protective effects of this education lasted up to two years in the tested population^[3]. This approach is especially attractive to universities as the program was designed to be relatively inexpensive and standardized and have built-in potential for dissemination^[4].

Next Steps

Individual universities adopting this curriculum would be an excellent first step in order to test its efficacy and actuality on a larger scale. If these efforts are as successful as predicted, then I suggest that policy similar to the

mandate on drug and alcohol education be integrated into educational policy, effectively expanding GAR 86 to include eating disorder education as a necessary awareness effort for universities to provide students with. An online program, such as Student Bodies or similarly targeted approach would effectively help college females develop healthy eating habits and serve as a protective factor against one of the most dangerous and prevalent mental condition in that age cohort.

Key Facts

- Eating disorders are real, compound, and devastating conditions that can have serious consequences for health, productivity, and relationships. Eating disorders are severe, potentially life-threatening conditions that affect a person’s emotional and physical health.^[1]
- Eating disorders are complex conditions that can arise from a combination of longstanding behavioral, biological, emotional, psychological, interpersonal, and social factors. Once started, however, they can create a self-perpetuating cycle of physical and emotional destruction. Given the young age of the onset, early intervention and prevention is crucial.^[1]
- A brief, 8-week, Internet-based cognitive-behavioral intervention led to sustained reductions in weight and shape concerns in college-age women

who were at high risk for developing EDs^[3]

- This study suggests that an Internet-delivered CAHE program can improve women's body satisfaction, a potential risk factor in the development of eating disorders^[4]

Talking Points

- Eating disorders are a very dangerous and prevalent physical and mental health threat to female college students.
- The prevalence of these disorders is increasing in college-aged female populations.
- Internet-based interventions are cost-effective, easy for students to access, and proven to be decrease risk for eating disorders among college-aged females.
- Federal law mandates universities educate students on alcohol and drug use in order to receive federal funds; the health threat of eating disorders to college-aged females should be addressed by following a similar course of action.

Action Plan Snapshot

Campus and Community Outreach are key first steps in implementing this approach to decreasing eating disorder prevalence. Public awareness campaigns of the lack of eating disorder mandated education, how common eating disorders are on campus, the dangers of eating

disorders, and current resources should be carried out in order to create interest in the issue. The effort to enact this approach in policy should initially be locally targeted and restricted to Cornell University. Meeting with faculty responsible for student mental health initiatives would be key contacts.

In addition to faculty connections, student organizations such as Body Positive Cornell and Cornell Panhellenic Council would be important coalition members due to their mission statements and the targeted populations they interact with. Specifically, Cornell Panhellenic Council's annual "Women's Wellness Week" would be an excellent time to utilize this advocacy coalition. In addition, the NEDA Eating Disorders Awareness Week would be helpful as a focusing event to push this policy.

Media used in this campaign would be a combination of social media and perhaps an event on campus in tandem with members of the coalition listed above. For example, handing out statistics about eating disorders.

December to February should be concerned with creating a coherent curriculum and contacting key members of the coalition to see if they would like to participate in awareness building efforts and support the policy. The two events mentioned above, generally and conveniently overlap, taking place at the end of February/early March. This would be the best time to take the campaign public. After this awareness is built, advocacy to fully

enact the policy can take place. Individuals would work with Cornell administration to integrate eating disorder online curriculum into its policy for educating incoming students of new potential health risks that are posed to them in college.

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Menstrual Hygiene in Virginia Prison System

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Currently, women in prisons are unable to access the menstrual products they need. Since such products should be viewed as a necessity and not a luxury, Virginia should make it mandatory for state, local, and regional jails to dispense menstrual hygiene products free of cost to all prisoners within the state.

Background

The Federal Bureau of Prisons released a memo on August 1, 2017 ordering all federal prisons to provide female sanitary products to inmates free of charge^[6]. However, this memo falls short in two ways. First, the mandate expires in August of 2018, allowing federal prisons to revert back to their ways later this year. Second, it solely affects federal prisons, which only hold approximately 13,000 women prisoners; this leaves 111,500 women in state prisons and 99,100 in local jails without free access to feminine hygiene products^[3,16]. In a study conducted in 2015 by the Correctional Association of New York, it was revealed that 54 percent of women in prison found the supply of sanitary pads they receive each month unsatisfactory^[14]. The Virginia Department of Corrections currently provides pads free of cost to the 3,236 women incarcerated within the state; however, tampons are dispensed only if prisoners are willing to pay \$7.00 for a box of tampons in the prison commissary^[13]. This is in spite of the fact that tampons are

preferred by 40 percent of women^[4]. In local and regional jails, the problem is even worse since there are no products given out for free, leaving prisoners forced to spend their already minimal salary on the hygiene products they require. In Virginia, the standard day's prison salary of \$0.25-0.40 means it would take 17.5 to 28 hours of work to buy a standard box of tampons^[13].

Policy Idea

Since the majority of incarcerated women are found in state and local prisons, fewer than 10 percent of all inmates will be affected by the policy change imposed by the Federal Bureau of Prisons^[3,16]. As a result, state governments need to take matters into their own hands in order to ensure that every woman is obtaining the proper number of menstrual products they require. Through state legislation, Virginia should require all state, local, and regional jails to provide each month a choice between free pads and free tampons, or a combination of both. Rather than receiving products in minimum quantities or upon

request, individuals should determine for themselves what quantity they require.

Policy Analysis

While women now make up 7% of the prison population, health care for female inmates remains poor with policies reflecting a historically male prison population^[7]. In an effort to meet the needs of the changing demographics, several state, city and county government bodies have taken matters into their own hands by working to achieve menstrual equity. Advocates, such as the CAN-DO Foundation, argue that menstrual products are a necessity, not a luxury and should be treated as such by all levels of government. The New York City Council was the first to pass such legislation by requiring all jails, public school bathrooms, and homeless shelters to provide feminine hygiene products free of cost. Since then, other states have followed suit, including Arizona, Colorado, Nebraska and Maryland. Such legislature is a step in the right direction towards treating women in prison in a humanizing, appropriate

way. The Maryland legislation serves as a particularly appropriate example for Virginia, considering the state’s close proximity ^[10]. Although the plan may sound costly, the Virginia Department of Corrections estimates that to provide the necessary number of products—both tampons and pads—would require an allocation of \$33,679 annually, which could be covered under the department’s total budget of \$1.1 billion ^[5,15]. However, since local jails are not under the direct authority of the department, this estimate does not include the cost to local and regional jails that currently do not provide any free products to inmates. When one compares the cost imposed by such a change in prison policy to the total department’s budget of \$1.1 billion dollars, the extra funds required are relatively small, especially in comparison to its impacts; however, any reallocation of funds inevitably results in funds being taken away from another measure, which is something to consider. Formerly incarcerated women have attested that there were times when they would only receive a few pads a month due to low supplies ^[12]. Even though products are sold through the commissary, access can be impossible for individuals without sufficient funds. Studies show that poor menstrual hygiene puts women at risk of a range of infections, from skin irritation to fatal toxic shock syndrome ^[9]. But the effects aren’t solely biological; the ability for a woman to choose for themselves which menstrual products to use

and at what quantity helps preserve female dignity. In prisons, women lack full control over their own bodies. A correctional officer should not have agency over a woman’s reproductive health; such control should be left to the individual woman.

Next Steps

On Tuesday, March 6, the Senate joined the House in approving a bill which would provide inmates with feminine hygiene products free of cost. In order for House Bill 83 to become law and take effect in July, Governor Ralph Northam has to sign it ^[5]. Nonprofits, like “BRAWS: Bringing Resources to Aid Women’s Shelters,” have played an influential role in getting the bill this far by raising awareness about the need for menstrual equity ^[2]; however, even more pressure will need to be imposed by non-profits, grassroots activists, and ordinary citizens in order to get passed this next hurdle. Petition signing and letter writing may help influence the governor to sign House Bill 83 ^[5]. If Virginia enacts this legislation, it could result in more states following suit—further ensuring female inmates have access to the menstrual hygiene products they require.

Key Facts

- Approximately 210,000 women prisoners are without free access to menstrual products in the U.S ^[3].
- Fifty-four percent of women in prison found the supply of

sanitary pads they receive each month unsatisfactory, as revealed by a 2015 study by the Correctional Association of New York ^[14].

- It would take prisoners 17.5 to 28 hours of work to buy one standard box of prisons in Virginia ^[13].

Talking Points

- Menstrual products are a necessity, not a luxury.
- The deprivation of feminine hygiene products results in the dehumanization of inmates.
- To provide for personalized needs, Virginia should provide free access to both pads and tampons for all female prisoners within the state.

Action Plan Snapshot

Our next step is to lobby the Virginia state Governor to sign House Bill 83 ^[5]. Bearing in mind the successful implementation of granting female inmates free access to menstrual hygiene products in other states, particularly that of Maryland, the Governor should find sufficient evidence for the need to enact such legislation. “Women on the Rise Telling HerStory (WORTH)” could serve as a useful tool, considering its role as an advocacy group composed of currently and formerly incarcerated women, who are united to inform and change policy surrounding the prison system. However, ordinary citizens could play an influential role in impacting the Governor’s decision by signing petitions and writing letters. If the Governor does

sign the bill, it will be necessary for there to be follow-up in order to ensure the successful implementation in all state, local, and regional prisons across the state.

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Increasing Maternal Mortality Ratios in the US: Institute a National Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Board

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As the United States' maternal mortality ratio continues to increase while other developed countries' ratios decrease, it is important to delve further into what is causing this increased number of pregnant women or recently pregnant women dying. As already instituted in a number of states, a national maternal mortality and morbidity review board would be able to consolidate data from across the country to better interpret what is going wrong and what can be done to fix the problem before it continues to get worse.

Background

As medicine has advanced throughout time, survival rates for the most common medical procedures, including child birth, have increased. The maternal mortality ratio is defined as the number of mothers out of 100,000 live births who have died within 42 days of pregnancy or termination of pregnancy (Bacak, 2006). While the world had been making great strides in decreasing the maternal mortality ratio, especially in developed countries, the United States recently took a step back. Currently, the United States is ranked 50th in the world in terms of maternal mortality (APHA, 2011). From 1990 to 2013, the maternal mortality ratio in the United States more than doubled from 12 to 28 maternal deaths per 100,000 births (Agrawal, 2015). Additionally, cases of maternal morbidity, when a

mother suffers a dangerous and life-threatening complication, has increased at an even faster rate than maternal mortality, now around 50,000 women a year suffer (Ellison, 2017). Both of these problems are not only devastating to the family and community, but they also cost taxpayers money that could have been saved. According to one study at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, 44% of life-threatening complications to childbirth could have been avoided had there been an "improvement in care (Ellison, 2017)." Additionally, for maternal deaths, about half could have been prevented with improvement in medical care.

Part of the problem is a lack of good data and analysis to understand what is happening and why. For example, while maternal mortality and morbidity has

affected all racial group in the United States, the rate is up to twelve times higher for African-American women and also significantly higher for residents of rural or low-income areas (Fields 2017). Without a central organization to analyze this data and see if there are similarities that could be fixed across the country, the maternal mortality and morbidity ratios will continue to get worse.

Policy Idea

Increased national funding should be allocated to the Department of Health and Human Services to fund a national maternal mortality and morbidity review board to aggregate data and set national standards to better understand the United States' problem with maternal mortality and morbidity and how to best

address it. A collection of different voluntary and paid employees would sit on this board including obstetricians, neonatologists, anesthesiologists, midwives, nurses, medical examiners, epidemiologists, statisticians, social workers, public health specialists, and hospital administrators and would review cases from around the country, standardize a system for identifying and reporting maternal mortality, and review trends to determine if any action can be done nationally to curb this problem. Ideally, the board would devise a 10-year plan to significantly lower maternal mortality rates.

Policy Analysis

During the 2019 fiscal year, the Department of Health and Human Services was allocated \$1,216 billion dollars in outlays (2019 Budget Department of Health and Human Services). In comparison to their budget, the creation of a maternal mortality and morbidity board would not require much excess spending. As far as state review boards go, the budgets range from no funding to a mere \$135,000 (Agrawal, 2015). Of course, this number will grow when instituted on the national level, but compared to many other policies, the review board would not be expensive to implement. Currently the United Kingdom has a similar national maternal mortality review board. One success of it is the allocation of 0.6 million pounds each year to allow for maternal care (Better Births). Many members would serve part time and their

commitment to the board would be voluntary if funds could not be sufficed to pay them. Funding would be needed to pay for travel, communication services, data processing, computer and data analysis software, and office space. Additionally, stipends would be given to the lead on the committee and ideally the members of the committee will be (minimally) compensated for their time. By factoring in this cost to the 2020 budget towards the Department of Health and Human Services, the money could be allocated relatively quickly so that the process of creating the board can begin. The return on the money invested in the maternal mortality and morbidity board could be significant and could begin to pay for itself. Each unnecessary extraordinary measure or extra procedure needed to save or try and save (but fail) a mother's life after suffering a severe complication costs taxpayer's money. Especially considering that low income areas are at a greater risk for maternal death or severe complication, there is a great amount of money coming from the government to pay for these treatments. Considering 34% of the Department of Health and Human Services' budget is allocated to paying for Medicaid each year, a reduction in Medicaid costs would bring more money back into the budget. No money would be taken away from Medicaid, but money would naturally be saved if maternal mortality and morbidity decreases.

Even more than the potential long-term monetary benefits, the benefit to society is important to consider also. Maternal mortality tears apart families, orphans infants, and brings sadness to the family and the United States should be leading the pack in lowering the maternal mortality ratio. Other affluent countries, such as the United Kingdom, already have a version of a review board and also have a lower maternal mortality ratio than the United States does. The aggregate of unknown factors playing into maternal mortality and the subgroups that exhibit increased maternal mortality need to centrally be discussed and analyzed.

The data stated above support the effectiveness and feasibility of the proposal. Large scale gathering of data is essential to determine the next steps to move towards lowering the United States' maternal mortality ratio.

Next Steps

Based on the potential long term economic benefits, in addition to low initial cost, and most importantly the great contribution to society, it is recommended that the policy be implemented and that a national maternal mortality and morbidity board is established. The next step is to have stakeholders lobby members of Congress to suggest increasing the budget of the Health and Human Service's Department. Additionally, the director of the Department should be convinced of the urgent importance of the board. If the creation of a separate board in the

Health and Human Service's Department fails, the maternal mortality and morbidity board could also be housed in a variety of different divisions including the CDC and NIH.

Key Facts

- 28 maternal deaths occur per every 100,000 births in the United States
- The United States ranks 50th in the maternal mortality ratio across the world
- The ratio continues to increase while most other developed countries decrease
- No national system to review maternal deaths

Talking Points

- A maternal mortality and morbidity review board could save the Department of Health and Human Services money long term.
- There is not sufficient national data to understand the true current ratio of maternal mortality and morbidity and why the United States' ratio is continuing to increase.
- Many other affluent countries have similar review boards and these countries also have lower maternal mortality rates than the United States'.

Action Plan Snapshot

On campus and in local communities, information should be disseminated about the increasing maternal mortality ratio and the increased number of near-misses (morbidity) and catastrophic complications. Many students are nearing the age where they are beginning to think about a family in

their long-term goals, even if it is not for 10 years to come. The increasing ratio of maternal deaths is information that many people are not aware of. When thinking about maternal mortality, many people's minds jump straight to the developing world, where it is still a tremendous problem, but they do not realize the impact it still has here in the United States. Once campus and community members are more aware of the issue, I believe that there will be more speech about it on campus, which will keep it in the public's eyes. For example, campus rhetoric surrounding school shootings increased after the Parkland shooting. Television and radio ads could feature husbands affected by the loss of a wife as well as doctors to appeal to both the ethos and pathos of the viewer. While it is not necessary for grassroots engagement on a topic this technical, general public support could place maternal mortality on the agenda.

Since many states already have maternal mortality and morbidity review boards, the next step is to go straight to the federal government. In order for the board to be most effective, it needs to be created at the national level so the data can be collected from all 50 states and analyzed. Policy pushes could be taken to lobby and inform members of Congress so that this issue is brought to their attention. This issue should not be a partisan issue considering it affects everybody and the maternal mortality and morbidity board is a

universal policy that would benefit everybody, therefore hopefully generating popular public and Congressional support. Representatives and Senators from states that already have maternal mortality and morbidity boards could be key allies in arguing for the creation of a national board. Having meetings with important officials within the Department of Health and Human services would be necessary. Also, it would be important to have institutions such as the Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology backing the proposal. Ideally, information is spread and popular support is generated in time to add money within 10 years towards the budget for the Health and Human Services.

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Marketing to Physicians: Ending the undue influence of pharmaceutical companies on physician prescribing

By Lisa Yu, ly325@cornell.edu

Billions of dollars are gifted annually to doctors by pharmaceutical companies who prioritize sales above patient health. This has not only led to biases in physician judgement and increased prescribing of branded drugs, but has also contributed to more systemic problems such as the current opioid crisis. Current government regulations do not do enough to limit the influence of pharmaceutical companies over doctors. A national certificate that recognizes physicians who do not accept any money from pharmaceutical companies is proposed as a solution. This “bias-free” certification would increase public knowledge surrounding this issue and encourage patients to seek out doctors that have patient health as their first priority.

Background

While not often acknowledged, pharmaceutical companies market aggressively to physicians by providing financial and material incentives in many different forms. Pharmaceutical representatives will offer free lunches, all-inclusive conferences, paid promotional talks, free samples and even bonus payments for high prescribers.^[8] It is even common for pharmaceutical companies to purchase the prescribing data of physicians in order to keep track of their marketing efforts.^[1] The reality is that physicians are being bribed by pharmaceutical companies to prescribe their drugs. Unfortunately, no comprehensive study on the effects of marketing on patient outcomes has been

performed, but the intrinsic bias of the system and the indirect effects of excessive marketing have been well studied. When physicians accept gifts from pharmaceutical companies, there is an irreconcilable dissonance between the intentions of pharmaceutical companies to maximize sales and the interest of physicians to improve the health of their patients. It has been repeatedly shown that no matter how large a gift is, pharmaceutical gift giving creates a bias in receiving physicians that can be shown through increased prescribing of more expensive, branded drugs.^[1, 3, 4, 8] Although most physicians do not believe that they can be influenced by these marketing efforts, research shows that an unconscious bias

towards a certain brand is easily established by pharmaceutical representatives.^[8] Additionally, it has been found that the opioid crisis in America can be linked back to aggressive marketing tactics by opioid producers such as Purdue Pharma.^[6] Purdue kept a database of high-prescribing physicians and pharmacies, fulfilled 34,000 free sample coupons and spoke to over 5000 physicians at 40 training conferences in expensive resorts, all while promoting false information about the risks of opioids.^[6] This has led to over 300,000 deaths from opioid overdoses since 2000.^[2] In the past 15 years, there have been some government efforts to reduce the influence of pharmaceutical companies on

physician prescribing, but these changes have not been enough. The acceptance of excessive pharmaceutical marketing to doctors has created a culture where drug spending rises every year and patient needs come second.

Policy Idea

A Federal recognition system should be set up to reward healthcare professionals who have declined all contact with pharmaceutical representatives. This “bias-free” certification would encourage physicians to be self-initiating in reducing the impact of pharmaceutical marketing on their decision making, and prevent doctors from being at a disadvantage if they choose to reject pharmaceutical gifts.

Policy Analysis

There are currently two major strategies in place to regulate pharmaceutical marketing to doctors, but neither of these strategies is accomplishing enough. The first strategy has been for individual states to implement partial bans on pharmaceutical gift giving towards doctors. Maine is one of the few states that bans gift-giving, but upon closer look, many forms of pharmaceutical marketing are still permitted. For example, companies can still give gifts of under \$50, give free samples, pay for consulting, and pay physicians to speak at educational events.^[5] While these

gifts may seem innocuous at first, the reality is that pharmaceutical companies still have immense power over physicians. It has been found that these educational events are incredibly biased with 11% of statements presented being false and in favour of the product.^[4] These events are more accurately marketing events rather than educational ones. Free samples may seem beneficial for patients at first, but they often lead to more expensive prescriptions in the long run. Finally, it has also been shown that any amount of gift-giving by pharmaceutical companies introduces bias into physician prescribing, so these laws only really serve to eliminate the most extreme forms of gift-giving. A second strategy that has been implemented on a national scale are the “sunshine laws” that obligate most gift-giving to be reported and available for public viewing. This process has increased transparency and awareness, but pharmaceutical companies still circumvent the law by finding loopholes, and doctors may then feel morally excused from any bias if their gift receiving has been reported.^[1]

As a result of these ongoing challenges with the regulation of pharmaceutical gift-giving and the obvious influence of the pharmaceutical industry over physicians, a common call to action has been to ban any kind of gift-giving altogether. This proposal would not only be unrealistic, however, but also

inefficient in practice. As a \$330 billion dollar industry, pharmaceutical companies are likely to be favoured when legislation is proposed, and even if a full ban were put in place, companies would simply find new ways to influence physicians.^[7] The proposal of implementing a physician reward system would approach this issue from a different angle. Rather than compel physicians and the entire pharmaceutical industry to follow a regulation, a Federal “bias free” certification for physicians that have not accepted anything from pharmaceutical companies would instead provide an incentive for physicians to self-regulate. Under the current system, physicians who refuse pharmaceutical gifts are at a financial disadvantage compared to the majority of their peers. This proposal would reverse the status quo by encouraging patients to seek out non-biased doctors who use their best professional judgement to prescribe medications and give these doctors a competitive edge over their peers who accept payments. At the same time, a nationally recognized certificate system would also increase patient awareness of the excessive marketing by pharmaceutical companies. Although gift reporting is available to the public, the data is not widely accessed by patients and not used often enough in decision making. One of the main benefits of this proposal is that

there would be minimal costs involved with creating this program. The data is already collected yearly and the only additional costs would be data analysis, issuing physical certifications, and promoting the program across America.

Next Steps

An essential next step is to conduct research on public opinions about the efficacy of this policy. Surveys or informational interviews should be conducted to determine whether patients would find the certificate a useful tool and how to best promote the program.

The idea of promoting “bias-free” physicians could then be tested in a pilot study. Physicians from one city or even just one hospital could begin rewarding physicians for declining pharmaceutical marketing efforts, and the impact on patient choice and physician prescribing could be measured and compared. Should this preliminary research yield positive results, a cohesive program should be established across America using the data collected and available from <https://openpaymentsdata.cms.gov/>.

Key Facts

- In 2012 alone, it was estimated that pharmaceutical companies spent \$24 billion USD on marketing efforts, and that 9 out of the 10 largest

pharmaceutical companies spent more on marketing than research and development.^[7]

- Of this amount, over 80% is attributed to direct and indirect gifts to physicians, with an estimated 94% of physicians receiving some sort of benefit from these marketing relationships.^[1]

Talking Points

- Pharmaceutical gift giving has been strongly correlated with physicians writing overall higher quantities of prescriptions, more costly prescriptions, and more branded drugs.^[3]
- Current ‘bans’ on gift-giving have exceptions and loopholes that still allow for pharmaceutical companies to unduly influence physicians, leaving much to be desired.
- The “bias-free” certification would incentivize self-regulation and introduce awareness and discussion of pharmaceutical marketing into consumer decision making.

Action Plan Snapshot

Campus/Community Outreach: Speak to Cornell Health, local clinics and hospitals in Tompkins County to determine the extent of pharmaceutical marketing in the community. Survey the Cornell and Ithaca population about their opinions on the proposed change.

Policy Affairs: Lobby to Cornell Health and Tompkins County

Health Department to promote recognition for physicians who decline pharmaceutical gifts in local hospitals and practices. It would be ideal to then present the idea to Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, who currently keeps track of the data about pharmaceutical gift-giving. A united national system from the same department that maintains transparency would be most effective at launching this program successfully.

Coalition: Local public health departments such as Tompkins County Health Department. The most important partners would be Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and the American Medical Association.

Communication Plan: Since pharmaceutical marketing towards physicians affects every single person, the average American would be more compelled to act than when faced with more distant issues. Media outlets that allow information to spread quickly and even go viral would be most effective and the initial focus of media communication would be to spread awareness of the problem. In order for the “bias free” certification process to be successful, government agencies and individual physicians must effectively communicate the idea to the general public. The certification should be both physically present at a doctor’s office and visible on all physician

listings online (e.g. the AMA Doctor Finder).

Timeline:

December – Speak to Cornell Health and Tompkins County Health Department to understand their specific regulations and opinions on pharmaceutical gift giving.

January – Distribute surveys to community members, physicians and medical students to gauge public opinions and interests.

February to March – Promote certain doctors in the local community who do not accept gifts and track the impact of the recognition on both patients and the doctors.

April – Speak to the American Medical Association to establish a partnership and convince them to support this program.

May – Lobby to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to implement the program.

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