

Eye on the World

Dec. 24, 2016

This compilation of material for "Eye on the World" is presented as a service to the Churches of God. The views stated in the material are those of the writers or sources quoted by the writers, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the members of the Church of God Big Sandy. The following articles were posted at churchofgodbigandy.com for the weekend of Dec. 24, 2016.

Compiled by Dave Havir

Luke 21:34-36—"But take heed to yourselves, lest your souls be weighed down with self-indulgence, and drunkenness, or the anxieties of this life, and that day come on you suddenly, like a falling trap; for it will come on all dwellers on the face of the whole earth. But beware of slumbering; and every moment pray that you may be fully strengthened to escape from all these coming evils, and to take your stand in the presence of the Son of Man" (Weymouth New Testament).



A video of the "Opening Statement" given by Judge Jeanine Pirro on her Fox News show on Dec. 17, 2016, has been posted on many outlets on the Internet. Judge Jeanine's comments criticized statements made by Michelle Obama in an interview with Oprah Winfrey on Dec. 14. Following is a transcript of Judge Jeanine's comments.

Judge Jeanine: The left has been telling you for years what you can eat, what you should say and now how you should feel. Take a listen to Michelle Obama.

Michelle Obama during an interview with Oprah Winfrey: "Yes, I do. Because we feel the difference now. See, now we're feeling what not having hope feels like, you know [laughs]. Hope is necessary. It's a necessary concept. What else do you have if you don't have hope?"

Judge Jeanine: Really? This from a woman who in 2008 at 44 years old said for the first time in her life she was proud of her country when her husband was running for president? And now, eight years later, you're out of Hope, Michelle?

You've lived a life few can even imagine at the citadel of power and prestige in the world, you and your husband blessed by God and the American people with the unique and historic opportunity to not only lead America from that shining place on a hill but impact Americans and give them hope that virtu-

ally no others can. And, now that you're leaving, hope is gone? Since when does hope rise and fall with you and Barack in the White House?

But it doesn't end there. When asked if your husband's administration achieved its promise of hope to Americans your answer: "a resounding yes." Quote, "especially in times of crisis, and turmoil."

Are you kidding? Did your husband give hope to the parents of James Foley or Steven Sotloff, who was in custody for over a year while being told his family could not negotiate because they'd be prosecuted before their sons' heads were chopped off?

To try and convince America that once you and Barack exit the White House hope is removed for America is an outrage. And I'll tell you what else is an outrage. An outrage is when your husband struts up to the microphone at a national prayer breakfast and tells Christians to get off their high horses because the Christians are afraid of Muslim terrorists cutting their heads off. And I'd say that that was a crisis, but no hope there. ISIS today only looms larger.

By the way, Michelle, have you heard of San Bernardino, Orlando or that workplace violence that happened at Fort Hood in Texas?

And times of crisis and turmoil, like the 13 hours those heroes were on a rooftop in Benghazi? Your all-powerful husband never bothered to explain to us where he was and what he was doing that night. All we know is the only power he was ready to unleash was Air Force One to fly to Las Vegas for a fundraiser the next morning so that you guys could live the life another four years in the White House.

But I get it. For you, hope *is* gone. You and your family and friends won't be able to fly to another 46 countries with security and hair and makeup and joe. Michelle, you may not realize it but Americans rejected you and everything you stand for.

They know what hope is. Hope is when people 30,000 at a time stand in line in the cold with their children hoping to get a glimpse of a man that they think can change the course of their lives from the downward spiral that you and Mr. Hope and Change have put them on.

I'll tell you what hope and change is. Hope and change is when people show up 20,000 strong *after* an election, desperate to see the man who actually brought back jobs, almost a thousand when your husband said it was impossible to bring them back at Carrier.

And by the way if you want to know what it really feels like to not have hope, just walk out of the White House as ordinary Americans. you'll see real fast. Welcome to the America you created, the one with the racial divide. a disrespect of law enforcement and the military, illegals cruising our borders, draining our schools and social services, ISIS and refugees on the rise.

No hope? Michelle, I'm surprised at you. What happened to "When they go low, we go high"?



An article by Jason Hanna titled "Tsunami Alerts Cancelled Following 7.9 Earthquake Off Papua New Guinea" was posted at cnn.com on Dec. 17, 2016. Following are excerpts of the article.

Tsunami warnings issued after a 7.9 magnitude earthquake struck off Papua New Guinea on Saturday [Dec. 17] night have been canceled, the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center [PTWC] and New Zealand government said.

The quake struck in the ocean about 45 kilometers east of Papua New Guinea's New Ireland island, also known as Latangai, at about 8:51 p.m. (5:51 a.m. ET), the US Geological Survey said.

The extent of damage was not immediately known.

Alun Beck, owner of the Treehouse Village Resort on the island of New Ireland, told CNN he didn't feel anything and was setting up fishing boats to go shark fishing when the earthquake hit. He found out about the quake two hours later via social media and had not heard about major damage.

Hazardous tsunamis were initially possible though about midnight local time along some coasts of that country, as well as the Solomon Islands, Pohnpei, Chuuk, Indonesia, Nauru, Kosrae and Vanuatu, the PTWC said.



An article titled "Russian Ambassador to Turkey Shot in Ankara" was posted at foxnews.com on Dec. 19, 2016. Following are excerpts of the article.

Russian President Vladimir Putin vowed revenge on Monday for the assassination of Russia's ambassador to Turkey, who was shot in the back by a renegade Turkish special forces police officer during an apparent Islamic terror attack.

Putin spoke with other members of his cabinet in a brief meeting that was broadcast and translated on RT and came mere hours after Ambassador Andrei Karlov was brazenly gunned down.

"We have to know who organized the killing, who gave orders to the assassin," said Putin, who also pledged to punish those responsible.

"The fight against terrorism will only be stepped up," he said.

Putin called Karlov an "outstanding diplomat" and said he knew him personally. He called for a memorial to be erected in his honor.

Putin said an investigation into the incident was ongoing.

Photographers captured the chilling moment 22-year-old Mevlut Mert Altintas opened fire inside an Ankara art exhibit Monday, killing Karlov and wounding at least three others as Altintas shouted jihadi propaganda before being killed.

Still and video cameras were trained on Karlov, who was giving a speech at the Ankara Center for Contemporary Art when a man wearing a dark suit suddenly shot Karlov in the back. Video captured the incident and shows Karlov grimacing and falling to the ground as the gunman, later identified as Altintas, moves toward his body.

Turkish Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu said Altintas had been working for the riot police squad in Ankara for the past two and one-half years. Witnesses said he entered the building with a police ID.

Altintas could be heard yelling "*Allahu akbar*" and shouting Arabic verses popular with Jihadis, according to a FoxNews.com translation of video of the attack.

"Do not forget Aleppo, do not forget Syria . . . we die there every day . . . We are not safe here in the streets when they are dying over there," he said.

"You'll never be safe as long as other mothers are unsafe . . . Keep filming me, only my dead corpse will leave this building."

Altintas then turned back to the Syria conflict: "Whoever is responsible for this [tyranny] is going to pay."

Karlov, 62, had been Russia's ambassador to Turkey since July 2013. He was Russia's ambassador to North Korea from 2001-2006.

Karlov is survived by a wife and a son.



An article titled "Berlin Truck Crash Likely 'Terrorist Attack,' Police Say" was posted at cbsnews.com on Dec. 20, 2016. Following are excerpts of the article.

Berlin's police force said for the first time early Tuesday morning that the truck that rammed into pedestrians at a popular Christmas market was set deliberately on its deadly course, confirming that investigators were looking at it as a suspected "terrorist attack."

Addressing her shocked nation later Tuesday, Chancellor Angela Merkel agreed that, given the facts available, "we must assume it was a terrorist attack."

Law enforcement sources have told CBS News the one arrested suspect in the case, a 23-year-old Afghan national born to Pakistani parents who came to Germany as a migrant.

At least 12 people were killed and nearly 50 injured when the truck struck the popular Christmas market outside the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church

late Monday as tourists and locals were enjoying a traditional pre-Christmas evening near Berlin's Zoo station.

Merkel, who has been criticized for allowing in large numbers of migrants, addressed head-on the possibility that an asylum-seeker was responsible.

"I know that it would be particularly hard for us all to bear if it were confirmed that a person committed this act who asked for protection and asylum in Germany," Merkel said. "This would be particularly sickening for the many, many Germans who work to help refugees every day and for the many people who really need our help and are making an effort to integrate in our country."



An article titled "Iran: After Aleppo, We Will Intervene in Bahrain, Yemen" was posted at alarabiya.net on Dec. 16, 2016. Following is the article.

The leaders of Iran's Revolutionary Guards launched provocative statements against the Gulf states threatening to intervene in Bahrain and Yemen.

The comments were reported by Iranian media after what they described as a "victory in Aleppo," upon the massacres, starvation and displacement against civilians. Aleppo was considered as one of the strongholds of the opposition; however, the Syrian regime took a hold of it with the help and support of Iranian and Russian military troops.

In this context, the deputy commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Gen. Hossein Salami told the official Iranian news agency Islamic Republic News Agency that "The victory in Aleppo will pave the way for liberating Bahrain," pointing out that Iran has an expansion project that will extend to Bahrain, Yemen and Mosul after the fall of the Syrian city of Aleppo.

Salami said that "the people of Bahrain will achieve their wishes, the Yemeni people will be delighted, and the residents of Mosul will taste victory, these are all divine promises," as he put it.

He also pointed out that Iran is still providing unlimited support for the Houthi group, highlighting that Iranian missile could destroy the enemy targets in any area.

Salami described the control of the Syrian regime forces on the Syrian city of Aleppo, which have claimed the lives of hundreds of civilians as "a conquest."

The comments of the spokesman for the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Brigadier General Ramadan Sharif reveal the intentions of Tehran to expand geographically through bloody wars and military interventions in the Arab World.

Sharif noted that the Iranian forces and its sectarian militia from Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Hezbollah with the support of Russia played a "fateful and very influential role" in the battles of Aleppo.

It is noteworthy that Iran's hostility against Bahrain and the Gulf states has escalated since the Prime Minister of Britain, Theresa May, vowed her country's support for the Gulf States in the face of Iranian terrorism.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry summoned the British ambassador in Tehran in protest against Theresa May's remarks during her speech on the 7th of December, at the Summit of Gulf Cooperation Council, where she declared: "We need to work together to address Iranian regional hostilities whether it is in Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen, Syria, or in the Gulf itself."



An article by Robbie Gramer titled "India Overtakes Britain As the World's Sixth-Largest Economy" was posted at foreignpolicy.com on Dec. 20, 2016. Following are excerpts of the article.

Score one for the post-colonial underdog. India's economy has reportedly overtaken the United Kingdom's for the first time in over 100 years, now standing as the world's sixth-largest economy by GDP after the United States, China, Japan, Germany, and France. The milestone is a symbol of India's rapid economic growth and, conversely, the U.K.'s post-Brexit slump.

Economically, it's been a banner year for India. In February, it surpassed China as the world's fastest-growing economy. And in October, the International Monetary Fund predicted India would retain that title for the foreseeable future; its GDP is projected to increase by 7.6 percent through 2017.

"India may have a large population base but this is a big leap," Kiren Rijju, India's minister of state for home affairs, said of the news earlier this week.

India's former colonial ruler, the United Kingdom, is projected to grow by only 1.8 percent in 2016 and 1.1 percent in 2017. Since it voted to leave the European Union in June, which could entail leaving the EU's lucrative common market, Britain's economy and currency have struggled.

India's economy benefitted from a global commodities price slump through large trade gains and lower-than-expected inflation, according to the IMF. And since elected in 2014, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has driven sweeping market reforms to spur economic growth.



An article by Leah Barkoukis titled "Assange: Some Leaks May Have Come From Russia, But WikiLeaks' Source Did Not" was posted at townhall.com on Dec. 16, 2016. Following is the article.

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange insisted that the hacked emails from the DNC and Hillary Clinton's campaign chairman John Podesta did not come to his organization through Russian state actors. But, when it came to the documents sent to reporters at Gawker and The Hill, he couldn't be so sure.

"Our source is not the Russian government," Assange told Sean Hannity on his radio program Thursday.

"So in other words, let me be clear," Hannity asked, "Russia did not give you the Podesta documents or anything from the DNC?"

"That's correct," Assange responded.

The organization has a policy of not disclosing source information, but Assange said he's had to break this rule to avoid 'distraction attacks' against WikiLeaks.

"We're unhappy that we felt that we needed to even say that it wasn't a state party. Normally, we say nothing at all," Assange told Hannity. "We have . . . a strong interest in protecting our sources, and so we never say anything about them, never ruling anyone in or anyone out.

"And so here, in order to prevent a distraction attack against our publications, we've had to come out and say 'no, it's not a state party. Stop trying to distract in that way and pay attention to the content of the publication.' "

But as far as the leaks provided to Gawker and The Hill from Guccifer 2.0, Assange said it's possible they came from Russia.

"Now, who is behind these, we don't know," he said. "These look very much like they're from the Russians. But in some ways, they look very amateur, and almost look too much like the Russians."



An article by Nina Agrawal titled "The U.S. is No Stranger to Interfering in the Elections of Other Countries" was posted at latimes.com on Dec. 21, 2016. Following is the article.

he CIA has accused Russia of interfering in the 2016 presidential election by hacking into Democratic and Republican computer networks and selectively releasing emails. But critics might point out the U.S. has done similar things.

The U.S. has a long history of attempting to influence presidential elections in other countries—it's done so as many as 81 times between 1946 and 2000, according to a database amassed by political scientist Dov Levin of Carnegie Mellon University.

That number doesn't include military coups and regime change efforts following the election of candidates the U.S. didn't like, notably those in Iran,

Guatemala and Chile. Nor does it include general assistance with the electoral process, such as election monitoring.

Levin defines intervention as “a costly act which is designed to determine the election results [in favor of] one of the two sides.” These acts, carried out in secret two-thirds of the time, include funding the election campaigns of specific parties, disseminating misinformation or propaganda, training locals of only one side in various campaigning or get-out-the-vote techniques, helping one side design their campaign materials, making public pronouncements or threats in favor of or against a candidate, and providing or withdrawing foreign aid.

In 59% of these cases, the side that received assistance came to power, although Levin estimates the average effect of “partisan electoral interventions” to be only about a 3% increase in vote share.

The U.S. hasn’t been the only one trying to interfere in other countries’ elections, according to Levin’s data. Russia attempted to sway 36 foreign elections from the end of World War II to the turn of the century—meaning that, in total, at least one of the two great powers of the 20th century intervened in about 1 of every 9 competitive, national-level executive elections in that time period.

Italy’s 1948 general election is an early example of a race where U.S. actions probably influenced the outcome.

“We threw everything, including the kitchen sink” at helping the Christian Democrats beat the Communists in Italy, said Levin, including covertly delivering “bags of money” to cover campaign expenses, sending experts to help run the campaign, subsidizing “pork” projects like land reclamation, and threatening publicly to end U.S. aid to Italy if the Communists were elected.

Levin said that U.S. intervention probably played an important role in preventing a Communist Party victory, not just in 1948, but in seven subsequent Italian elections.

Throughout the Cold War, U.S. involvement in foreign elections was mainly motivated by the goal of containing communism, said Thomas Carothers, a foreign policy expert at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. “The U.S. didn’t want to see left-wing governments elected, and so it did engage fairly often in trying to influence elections in other countries,” Carothers said.

This approach carried over into the immediate post-Soviet period.

In the 1990 Nicaragua elections, the CIA leaked damaging information on alleged corruption by the Marxist Sandinistas to German newspapers, according to Levin. The opposition used those reports against the Sandinista candidate, Daniel Ortega. He lost to opposition candidate Violeta Chamorro.

In Czechoslovakia that same year, the U.S. provided training and campaign funding to Vaclav Havel’s party and its Slovak affiliate as they planned for the country’s first democratic election after its transition away from communism.

"The thinking was that we wanted to make sure communism was dead and buried," said Levin.

Even after that, the U.S. continued trying to influence elections in its favor.

In Haiti after the 1986 overthrow of dictator and U.S. ally Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier, the CIA sought to support particular candidates and undermine Jean-Bertrande Aristide, a Roman Catholic priest and proponent of liberation theology. The New York Times reported in the 1990s that the CIA had on its payroll members of the military junta that would ultimately unseat Aristide after he was democratically elected in a landslide over Marc Bazin, a former World Bank official and finance minister favored by the U.S.

The U.S. also attempted to sway Russian elections. In 1996, with the presidency of Boris Yeltsin and the Russian economy flailing, President Clinton endorsed a \$10.2-billion loan from the International Monetary Fund linked to privatization, trade liberalization and other measures that would move Russia toward a capitalist economy. Yeltsin used the loan to bolster his popular support, telling voters that only he had the reformist credentials to secure such loans, according to media reports at the time. He used the money, in part, for social spending before the election, including payment of back wages and pensions.

In the Middle East, the U.S. has aimed to bolster candidates who could further the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. In 1996, seeking to fulfill the legacy of assassinated Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and the peace accords the U.S. brokered, Clinton openly supported Shimon Peres, convening a peace summit in the Egyptian resort of Sharm el Sheik to boost his popular support and inviting him to a meeting at the White House a month before the election.

"We were persuaded that if [Likud candidate Benjamin] Netanyahu were elected, the peace process would be closed for the season," said Aaron David Miller, who worked at the State Department at the time.

In 1999, in a more subtle effort to sway the election, top Clinton strategists, including James Carville, were sent to advise Labor candidate Ehud Barak in the election against Netanyahu.

In Yugoslavia, the U.S. and NATO had long sought to cut off Serbian nationalist and Yugoslav leader Slobodan Milosevic from the international system through economic sanctions and military action. In 2000, the U.S. spent millions of dollars in aid for political parties, campaign costs and independent media. Funding and broadcast equipment provided to the media arms of the opposition were a decisive factor in electing opposition candidate Vojislav Kostunica as Yugoslav president, according to Levin. "If it wouldn't have been for overt intervention . . . Milosevic would have been very likely to have won another term," he said.



An article by Mara Liasson titled "Donald Trump: Strong Leader or Dangerous Authoritarian?" was posted at npr.com on Dec. 12, 2016. Following are excerpts of the article.

Even before he is sworn in, Donald Trump is putting his own stamp on the role of chief executive.

That has some people rejoicing—and others worried about where he’s going to take the country. Here is why some of Trump’s critics say the president-elect could be a threat to democratic institutions and why others say those fears are overblown.

Trump is shaping up to be more than just an activist president. With one tweet, he drives down the stock price of a major American company. With another, he unleashes a flood of death threats against a local labor leader who displeased him.

Evan McMullin, a former Republican House staffer and CIA operative who ran as an independent for president against Trump, points to Trump’s intervention with the Carrier company. Trump’s involvement led to Carrier agreeing to keep 750 jobs in the U.S. instead of moving them to Mexico.

McMullin charged that the Carrier deal showed that Trump has authoritarian instincts.

“The most fundamental part of authoritarianism is this idea that what the authoritarian believes should go,” McMullin told NPR. “They are the only authority. It’s the president making decisions about particular companies rather than working within the system to create laws that affect companies in the context of the rule of law.”

But others, even critics of Trump, say the Carrier deal was not necessarily a sign of a populist authoritarian in the making—it was merely bad economic policy.

Wall Street Journal columnist Bret Stephens, a Trump critic, said the president-elect is giving new meaning to the bully part of the bully pulpit.

“It just sets a dangerous precedent that a president can take a private company by the throat,” Stephens said. “It’s not what you’d expect from a guy who supposedly believes in the power that supports free markets.”

And, say others, it was a pretty lousy deal—since Carrier has announced it plans to automate the plant and lay off even more workers.

But Trump’s supporters say his intervention with Carrier shows Trump is a strong leader—doing exactly what he promised to do during the campaign. Conservative talk-show host Laura Ingraham, who is in contention for White House press secretary, said what Trump did, when he reminded Carrier’s parent company about its defense contracts with the federal government and got the company to accept the package of incentives the state of Indiana was already offering, was well within the bounds of executive action.

“Giving companies incentives to stay in states, as you see governors do all the time,” Ingraham said, “what’s wrong with that? What’s wrong with doing things that actually help regular, working-class Americans and that are popular?”

But the debate about Trump and democracy doesn't stop there. His critics say they can find no instance where Trump spoke in defense of democratic institutions or values. During the campaign he questioned the ability of a U.S.-born judge with Mexican parents to preside fairly over a lawsuit against him. Trump was suggesting that being an American has more to do with ethnic heritage than shared values.

When it comes to freedom of speech, Trump is famous for his attacks on the media. Those are standard for political candidates, but Trump went even further, threatening to alter libel laws so journalists could be "sued like they've never been sued before."

During the campaign, Trump also promised to throw Hillary Clinton in jail. Even after he won, his critics say his magnanimous offer to refrain from prosecuting her showed a lack of understanding of the U.S. democratic system, under which presidents don't get to decide by themselves whom to prosecute, let alone throw in jail.

Then there's the ongoing debate about Trump's constant stream of statements that have no basis in fact. Coupled with the torrent of fake news stories (which Trump has repeated), these falsehoods, Trump's critics say, could undermine liberal democracy.

Whether stating with zero proof that millions of noncitizens voted illegally, claiming falsely that climate change is a hoax, questioning baselessly (for years) whether Obama was born in the United States, stating that he "heard" the unemployment rate might really be 42 percent or that everything people hear from the "dishonest media" is a lie, Trump's messages are designed to sow confusion, McMullin said.

After all, if citizens can't believe anything they hear, then the easiest path is to just trust the leader. And, Trump has said, "I alone" can fix the country's problems.

To McMullin, this is a hallmark of authoritarians. He points to Trump's false claim that millions of illegal votes prevented him from winning a popular-vote majority, for example.

"It serves to undermine our democratic institutions," McMullin said. "If those institutions are weakened, if we have less faith, for example, in elections, that strengthens the hand of the authoritarian."

The response of Trump's supporters to that critique hasn't been what you'd expect. Instead of insisting that Trump is telling the truth, Trump's surrogates, like his former campaign Manager Corey Lewandowski, said falsehoods are just part of Trump's leadership style.

"This is the problem with the media," Lewandowski said at a recent Harvard University forum. "You guys took everything Donald Trump said so literally. And the problem with that is the American people didn't. They understood that sometimes when you have a conversation with people, you're going to say something, and maybe you don't have all the facts to back that up, but that's how the American people live."

Lewandowski seems to be arguing that since the average American might not know what he's talking about, why should Trump?

Other Trump surrogates, like Scottie Nell Hughes, openly embrace Trump's role as the first president operating in a post-factual world.

"There's no such thing, unfortunately, anymore of facts," Hughes said recently on The Diane Rehm Show. "And so Mr. Trump's tweets, amongst a certain crowd, a large—a large part of the population, are truth."

The argument that Trump's repeated prevarications pose a threat to democratic institutions, and to American democracy itself, is rejected by former George W. Bush strategist Karl Rove. He dismissed it as nothing more than left-wing hyperventilation.

"This is far-fetched, starting with the authoritarianism," Rove told NPR. "Yes, there are Republicans concerned that he rambunctiously doesn't understand the restraints on the executive, that he doesn't understand the prerogatives under Article 1 that Congress enjoys—yeah. But the process is going to teach him those constraints—and reality is going to teach him those constraints."

Former Clinton White House aide Bill Galston agrees. He points to the checks and balances American founders designed to restrain any president who tries to chip away at rule of law, individual rights, a free press or an independent judiciary.

"I think the next few years will be a kind of stress test for the liberal, democratic constitutional institutions that we have built with such pain and such struggle over the last two-and-a-quarter centuries," Galston said. "I am cautiously optimistic that our institutions will pass that test, but they will be tested."

This is what the conversation is like at the dawn of the age of Trump, where it's not yet clear what a Trump presidency will mean—for the economy, foreign policy or democratic institutions.



An article by Laretta Brown titled "On Its Way Out, Obama Administration Enacts Rule Preventing States From Defunding Planned Parenthood" was posted at cns.com on Dec. 15, 2016. Following is the article.

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) finalized a rule Wednesday [Dec. 14] that would block states from defunding abortion providers like Planned Parenthood.

The final version of the rule bans any recipient of Title X federal funding for family planning from excluding potential funding recipients "for reasons other than its ability to provide Title X services."

HHS claimed that "In the past several years, a number of states have taken actions to restrict participation by certain types of providers as subrecipients

in the Title X Program, unrelated to the provider's ability to provide family planning services. This has caused limitations in the geographic distribution of services and decreased access to services."

The rule was proposed in September and met opposition from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, who—in a comment submitted to HHS—emphasized that the "stated purpose of this proposed addition is to prevent states from excluding providers such as Planned Parenthood from subawards based on state criteria."

The bishops' organization argued that "states should retain the discretion to determine which subrecipients are best suited to provide family planning services" and called the change "ill advised."

The rule was also opposed by 18 senators and 90 members of the House of Representatives, led by Rep. Diane Black (R-Tenn.) and Sen. Joni Ernst (R-Iowa), who wrote that "HHS's purpose for engaging in the rulemaking appears on its face to be an attempt to subvert the will of elected representatives."

Black reacted to the news of the rule's finalization Wednesday, saying, "With this rule, we see an administration that has become unglued at the knowledge of the impending pro-life sea change in Washington, DC. President Obama knows that hope is rising for the innocent victims of Planned Parenthood's brutality and the big abortion industry's days of taxpayer-funded windfalls are numbered."

"We should not be surprised that his administration would lash out with this eleventh hour power grab on the way out the door, but I am certain this rule will not stand for long," Black continued.

"Come next year, our pro-life majorities in Congress will be positioned to work with President-Elect Trump and pro-life nominee for Secretary of Health and Human Services, Dr. Tom Price, to not only roll back this latest overreach but also to enact new legal protections for these most vulnerable members of our society. The Obama Administration will not have the last word. With this new year comes renewed opportunity to fight for the dignity of every unborn child, the wellbeing of every struggling mother, and the conscience rights of every American taxpayer."

The new regulation takes effect Jan. 18, 2017, just two days before President-elect Trump's inauguration.



A Reuters article by Valerie Volcovici and Timothy Gardner titled "Obama Bans New Oil, Gas Drilling Off Alaska, Part of Atlantic Coast" was posted at reuters.com on Dec. 20, 2016. Following are excerpts of the article.

U.S. President Barack Obama on Tuesday banned new oil and gas drilling in federal waters in the Atlantic and Arctic Oceans, in a push to leave his stamp on the environment before Republican Donald Trump takes office next month.

Obama used a 1950s-era law called the Outer Continental Shelf Act that allows presidents to limit areas from mineral leasing and drilling. Environmental groups said that meant Trump's incoming administration would have to go court if it sought to reverse the move.

The ban affects 115 million acres (46.5 million hectares) of federal waters off Alaska in the Chukchi Sea and most of the Beaufort Sea and 3.8 million acres (1.5 million hectares) in the Atlantic from New England to Chesapeake Bay.

Trump, who succeeds Obama on Jan. 20, has said he would expand offshore oil and gas drilling. A recent memo from his energy transition team said his policy could increase production in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas, as well as the mid- and south Atlantic.

A Trump representative did not immediately comment on the announcement.

Even if Trump tries to fight the move, few energy companies have expressed a desire to drill anytime soon off the coasts thanks to abundant cheap shale oil in North Dakota and Texas.

Exploratory drilling in the Arctic is expensive and risky. Shell Oil ended its quest to explore in harsh Arctic waters in 2015, after a vessel it was using suffered a gash and environmentalists uncovered a law that limited its drilling.

The American Petroleum Institute oil industry group disagreed about the permanence of the ban and said Trump could likely use a presidential memorandum to lift it.

"We are hopeful the incoming administration will reverse this decision as the nation continues to need a robust strategy for developing offshore and onshore energy," said Erik Milito, API's upstream director.

Joint action with Canada

The White House and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau jointly announced their move to launch "actions ensuring a strong, sustainable and viable Arctic economy and ecosystem."

Obama said in a statement that the joint actions "reflect the scientific assessment that, even with the high safety standards that both our countries have put in place, the risks of an oil spill in this region are significant and our ability to clean up from a spill in the region's harsh conditions is limited."

Canada will designate all Arctic Canadian waters as indefinitely off limits to future offshore Arctic oil and gas licensing, to be reviewed every five years through a climate and marine science-based life-cycle assessment.

The law under which Obama is acting enables a president to withdraw certain areas from leasing or drilling "for any public purpose," such as to limit the

impacts of climate change, according to a legal briefing by the Natural Resources Defense Council and Earth Justice.

Under that law, a president is not authorized to “undo” a previous withdrawal, making it more difficult for Trump to target without a lawsuit.

“No president has ever tried to undo a permanent withdrawal of an ocean area from leasing eligibility,” said Niel Lawrence, Alaska director and attorney at the Natural Resources Defense Council.

The provision has been used by six presidents from both parties over the past 65 years, including to withdraw as much as several hundred million acres at a time, he said.



An article by Paul Bedard titled “Obama Shock: Another \$6 Billion in ‘Midnight Regulations’ ” was posted at washingtonexaminer.com on Dec. 21, 2016. Following is the article.

President Obama, who this week has issued a flurry of environmental rules, is planning to unleash another set of “midnight regulations” right before he leaves office that will cost Americans \$6 billion.

Obama has already broken all past records on creating federal regulations and red tape, and his new adds will boost the overall price tag to over \$1 trillion.

The new regulations, according to the watchdog group American Action Forum, include four from the Environmental Protection Agency and one from Interior.

“These five measures alone could impose \$5.1 billion in costs and more than 350,000 paperwork burden hours. In addition, three other rules in proposed form could add \$898 million in burdens and 146,000 paperwork hours, for a cumulative total of nearly \$6 billion in potential midnight costs and nearly 500,000 burden hours from the two agencies. Consider, EPA and Interior have already imposed \$349 billion in previous burdens since 2009,” said AAF’s Sam Batkins.

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He raised concerns that the new environmental rules were rushed to build on Obama’s legacy of attacking climate change.

“The magnitude, \$5 billion in long-term costs, and timing could raise suspicion in Congress,” he said on the AAF website.

President-elect Trump has promised to cut regulations and several House and Senate committees are already producing target lists.



An article by Leah Barkoukis titled “Whoopi Goldberg Compares Right to Celebrate Christmas to Getting an Abortion” was posted at townhall.com on Dec. 16, 2016. Following are excerpts of the article.

Whoopi Goldberg thinks the right to observe Christmas is the same thing as a woman’s right to have an abortion.

Goldberg made the unusual comparison earlier this week during an exchange with her co-hosts on “The View” about the separation of church and state when it comes to the public display of nativity scenes.

Seemingly out of nowhere, Goldberg then claimed the celebration of Christmas is “the same conversation with a woman’s right to choose.”

“What I do with my body is my right. It is not your right to tell me,” she said. “The same thing is it’s—if you believe in Christmas, it’s not my right—you know, I grew up and—and, you know, kids who didn’t go to Catholic school had Christmas and they—we never knew what their religions were, but we hung ‘cause it was Christmas holiday.”

Viewers were quick to take to social media to point out just how crazy that comparison is.



An article by Jennifer Calfas titled “Electoral College: More Dem Than GOP Defections” was posted at thehill.com on Dec. 19, 2016. Following are excerpts of the article.

More Democratic electors [defected] than Republicans in the Electoral College vote.

Four Democratic electors in Washington state cast votes for candidates other than Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton, who carried the state.

In Hawaii, three votes went to Clinton, while one elector voted for Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders.

Democratic electors in Maine, Minnesota and Colorado separately tried to cast votes for different candidates, but saw their ballots barred. Clinton carried all three states.

Ahead of the Electoral College vote, the focus was on whether any voters would defect from casting ballots for Republican Donald Trump.

That didn’t happen. But two Republican electors in Texas chose alternatives to Trump. One, who had said weeks earlier he would switch is vote, chose

Ohio Republican Gov. John Kasich. The other chose former Texas Republican Rep. Ron Paul.

Trump sealed his victory Monday evening when Texas' 36 electoral votes pushed him over the edge of 270 with 304 votes.

Trump opponents led protests, printed full-page ads in newspapers in swing states and even offered to pay any fines incurred on GOP electors who would be legally punished for not voting for Trump.

In Washington, three rogue electors voted for former Secretary of State Colin Powell, while one voted for Faith Spotted Eagle, a Sioux Tribe elder who led protests against the Dakota Access Pipeline in North Dakota this year.

One Maine elector expressed interest in going rogue by voting for Sanders instead, but was told he could not and voted for Clinton.



An article by David Martosko titled "Final Tally Shows Trump Lost Popular Vote by 2.8 Million—But He Beat Clinton by 3 Million Votes Outside of California and New York" was posted at dailymail.co.uk on Dec. 21, 2016. Following are excerpts of the article.

Final vote tallies from the November 8 election show that Democrat Hillary Clinton out-pollled President-elect Donald Trump by 2.8 million votes while losing the contest by a wide margin in the all-important Electoral College.

Her upper hand with voters, however, came down to performances in New York and California that were far stronger than necessary.

Clinton won California by 4.2 million and took New York by more than 1.6 million. The combined 5.8 million-vote advantage in just those two states was more than twice the size of her overall edge nationwide.

When the dust settled, she lost the rest of the country by 3 million votes.

Trump tweeted, deleted and replaced a message Wednesday morning suggesting that the Electoral College system presents more difficult challenges than an election that relies only on raw vote totals.

"Campaigning for votes under the Electoral College system is much more difficult, and different, than the popular vote," he wrote on Twitter at first.

That message disappeared almost immediately, and Trump replaced it 20 minutes later with a more aggressive tweet including a direct shot at Clinton.

'Campaigning to win the Electoral College is much more difficult & sophisticated than the popular vote. Hillary focused on the wrong states!' he wrote in the replacement tweet.

Trump wrote in a followup message that 'I would have done even better in the election, if that is possible, if the winner was based on popular vote—but would campaign differently.'

Then he added: "I have not heard any of the pundits or commentators discussing the fact that I spent FAR LESS MONEY on the win than Hillary on the loss!"

Trump ended Election Night controlling 306 votes in the Electoral College, a number that slipped to 304 when presidential electors cast their ballots on Monday. Clinton had 232, but lost five turncoats for a total of 227.

Clinton would still have won California's 55 electoral votes if her margin there had been far smaller. The same is true of New York's 29 electoral votes.

Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich on Wednesday morning blasted liberals who insist Trump's victory is illegitimate because more Americans voted for Clinton.

"This is football season. A team can have more yards and lose the game. What matters is how many points you put on the board. The Electoral College is the points," he said on 'Fox & Friends.

"Trump actually carried—in the 49 states outside of California, he had a 1.2 million vote majority. He got killed in California because he never campaigned there," Gingrich said.

"The Democrats had two people running for the U.S. Senate the way California law works, no Republican running for the U.S. Senate. So we got beaten in the biggest state. It didn't matter. That's not how you pick the presidency. Trump's now going to be president. She's not going to be president. That's called winning the game."



Isaiah 55:6-11—"Seek you the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. 'For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,' says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it."