



## For-Profit Health Care Costs Thousands of Lives

BY MIKE STANKIEWICZ

The U.S.'s corporate, profit-driven health care system has likely cost thousands of Americans their lives and a single-payer health care system would better prepare the U.S. for the next pandemic.

These are the findings of a new Public Citizen report that lays out how the for-profit health care system has left the U.S. vulnerable and underprepared for the COVID-19 pandemic, and how a single-payer, public health insurance system in which all Americans are covered could have helped the U.S. better respond to the crisis.

With about half of Americans receiving their health care through their employer, more

than 22 million Americans lost their jobs and their insurance at the worst possible time. This added to the approximately 87 million Americans uninsured or underinsured going into the pandemic. Although federal programs covered COVID-19-related care, many uninsured people didn't know that.

Additionally, hospitals focused on profits and revenue were not able to accommodate the millions of American patients sick with COVID-19, while safety net hospitals that have closed in recent years left many communities without a provider.

But these problems existed long before COVID-19, [see Health Care, page 8](#) ▶



Supporters attend the Rally for Vaccine Access for Everyone, Everywhere on May 5 in Washington, D.C. During the rally, the United States announced its support for waiving intellectual property rights for COVID-19 vaccines. Photo courtesy of Eric Kayne/AP Images for Social Security Works.

## U.S. Supports Emergency WTO Waiver of Big Pharma Monopolies to Boost Vaccine Access

BY MARIANA LOPEZ

As *Public Citizen News* goes to print, President Joe Biden and U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai announced U.S. support for an initiative by 100 countries at the World Trade Organization (WTO) to temporarily waive intellectual property (IP) barriers to facilitate more production of COVID-19 vaccines globally.

"This is a global health crisis and the extraordinary circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic call for extraordinary measures," Tai announced.

Under Trump, the United

States and a handful of other WTO members blocked negotiations on this waiver from even starting last fall. The Biden administration was handed the opportunity to reverse Trump's self-defeating blockage. Big Pharma lobbied (and will continue to lobby) heavily against the waiver, while a mighty civil society coalition that Public Citizen helped build and leads waged an intensive campaign. The administration sided with the people over Big Pharma.

This was an enormous victory that sends a powerful signal to the world by breaking decades of U.S.

trade officials' active promotion of Big Pharma interests over public health.

In collaboration with Public Citizen's Access to Medicines division and Oxfam, Partners in Health, the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA, Doctors Without Borders, Health GAP, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the nurses and teachers unions, Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch campaigned to counter Big Pharma's team of over 100 lobbyists trolling Capitol Hill and pressuring the U.S. to remain [see WTO, page 4](#) ▶

## Report Reveals Corporate Sponsors of Voter Suppression

BY RICK CLAYPOOL

Some of the biggest names in Corporate America are backing state lawmakers who are pushing bills to make it more difficult to vote, a new Public Citizen report shows.

Corporations contributed \$50 million since 2015 to state legislators supporting anti-voter bills, including \$22 million over the past two years, according to the report, [see Suppression, page 7](#) ▶



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# GET TO KNOW PUBLIC CITIZEN ZACH STONE

An ongoing series profiling Public Citizen leaders and staffers



Public Citizen's Digital Manager Zach Stone has worked for the communications team for three years. Stone has worked in communications since graduating from Colorado College, where he studied political science and religion. With skills in social media marketing, video production, graphic design, and political scriptwriting, Stone is an expert at crafting innovative digital content to advance Public Citizen's advocacy campaigns. Stone has applied his expertise to Public Citizen's Medicare for All and public lands campaigns, in addition to targeting corrupt government officials and Trump administration myths.

### What led you to want to work at Public Citizen?

**Stone:** After spending my initial post-college years working in state-level health care advocacy, I decided that I wanted to work within the broader progressive moment. I always admired Public Citizen for being ahead of the curve on certain issues of progressive policy. I leaped at the opportunity to join the communications team and help grow the digital program. Three and a half years later, I'm still at it.

### What does a typical day at Public Citizen look like for you?

**Stone:** Few days look the same, which is something I enjoy immensely about my job. Our digital team is nimble, so we are constantly taking the pulse of the news cycle and seeking out opportunities for rapid-response and campaign growth. A typical day could involve research on current events or legislation that the digital team needs to respond to. Other days involve bigger-picture campaign planning. Juggling a variety of daily opportunities while managing the longer-term vision for the program is what makes this job

challenging, rewarding, and engaging.

### What is the process for launching a social media campaign?

**Stone:** We start every social media campaign by addressing the following two questions: What are the goals and who is the audience? There's no way to execute a successful social campaign without a clear understanding of what success looks like, how it will be measured, and who you are trying to reach. We then develop messaging and create content like video or graphics. Once the content for our campaigns is set, we cook up a distribution strategy and unleash our work to the masses.

### What is one of the most memorable projects you've worked on Public Citizen?

**Stone:** One project that comes to mind is when we called out Trump's Interior Secretary, a former oil and gas lobbyist, for his handouts to the fossil fuel industry. We rented a video truck, parked it directly outside the U.S. Department of the Interior, and blasted the soundtrack from the "Creature from the Black Lagoon" with a video loop of the Interior Secretary morphing into a swamp monster. We had it going for about eight hours, and you could hear it from blocks away. Countless Interior Department employees furtively showed their solidarity. A few others, who seemed to be higher-ups, were less than pleased.

### What do you like to do in your free time?

**Stone:** Whenever possible, especially during COVID-19, I like to get outside and into nature. I also love to travel and am a big road trip advocate. I've been to most states in the U.S. and am itching to travel internationally once Americans are no longer considered a health hazard to much of the globe. When I'm not outside, I like to read short stories, listen to music, or watch basketball. I'm a bit of an NBA nerd and tragically a long-time fan of the perennially mediocre Washington Wizards. ■ — *Compiled by Eva Gonzalez*

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Public Citizen is a national non-profit membership organization based in Washington, D.C. Since its founding by Ralph Nader in 1971, Public Citizen has fought for corporate and government accountability to guarantee the individual's right to safe products, a healthy environment and workplace, fair trade, and clean and safe energy sources. Public Citizen is active in Congress, the courts and government agencies.

Public Citizen does not accept government or corporate grants. Our funding comes from our supporters throughout the country, who believe there should be full-time advocates of democratic principles working on their behalf; from foundations; and from the sale of our publications. Public Citizen is an equal opportunity employer. To become a member of Public Citizen and receive the award-winning *Public Citizen News*, please call (202) 588-1000 or send a check payable to Public Citizen for \$20 to Public Citizen Membership Services at the address above.

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## Defending our Democracy

Our democracy, and our country, is at a crossroads.

We can choose to construct a true democracy and set out on a path to the transformational change our country so desperately needs.

Or, we can stand aside and let the forces of reaction, corporatism, racism, and fascism tear apart our democracy – blocking the votes of communities of color, extreme gerrymandering Congressional districts, and entrenching oligarchy.



**PRESIDENT'S VIEW**  
**ROBERT WEISSMAN**

Am I exaggerating?

Just pause for a moment and reflect on the fact that Georgia and other states are making it a criminal act to give water to someone standing in line to vote.

Really. Think about it for a moment. The ONLY reason even to con-

template such measures, let alone make them law, is a fundamental desire to sabotage our democracy.

Or, consider this: Just 100 individuals are responsible for 70 % of ALL giving to Super PACs. Just 100 people. And 97 of them are white.

The decision moment for our democracy is coming to a head, right now.

The good news is, we have available to us the pathway to advancing democracy and our progressive priorities: The For the People Act, the sweeping democracy reform legislation we helped draft and pass through the U.S. House of Representatives, along with the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

Together, those bills would, among many other measures:

- Establish automatic and same-day voter registration;
- Provide for two weeks of early voting;
- Restore the U.S. Department of Justice's authority to pre-approve election system changes in vote-suppressing states;
- Replace partisan gerrymandering with nonpartisan redistricting commissions;
- End Dark Money; and, crucially
- Establish a system of public financing for elections, where candidates that agree to forego Big Money contributions will have their small-donor contributions matched 6-1 with public monies.

This isn't everything we need to fix our broken democracy, but it's easily the farthest-reaching proposal of the last 50 years. It would stop the state's racist voter suppression. It would prevent extreme partisan and racial gerrymandering. And it would begin to cure the disease of Big Money domination of our politics, politicians, and policies.

Not so long ago many or most of these pro-

posals had strong bipartisan support. In one sense, that's still true. There is strong public support across partisan divides for key measures in the For the People Act, and overwhelming public support to limit the role of Big Money in our politics. However, that's not true for Republican politicians.

Thanks to some combination of their devotion to Donald Trump and his Big Lie about the 2020 election and a tragic determination that making it harder to vote is crucial to their electoral prospects, Republican politicians are in lock step against these proposals.

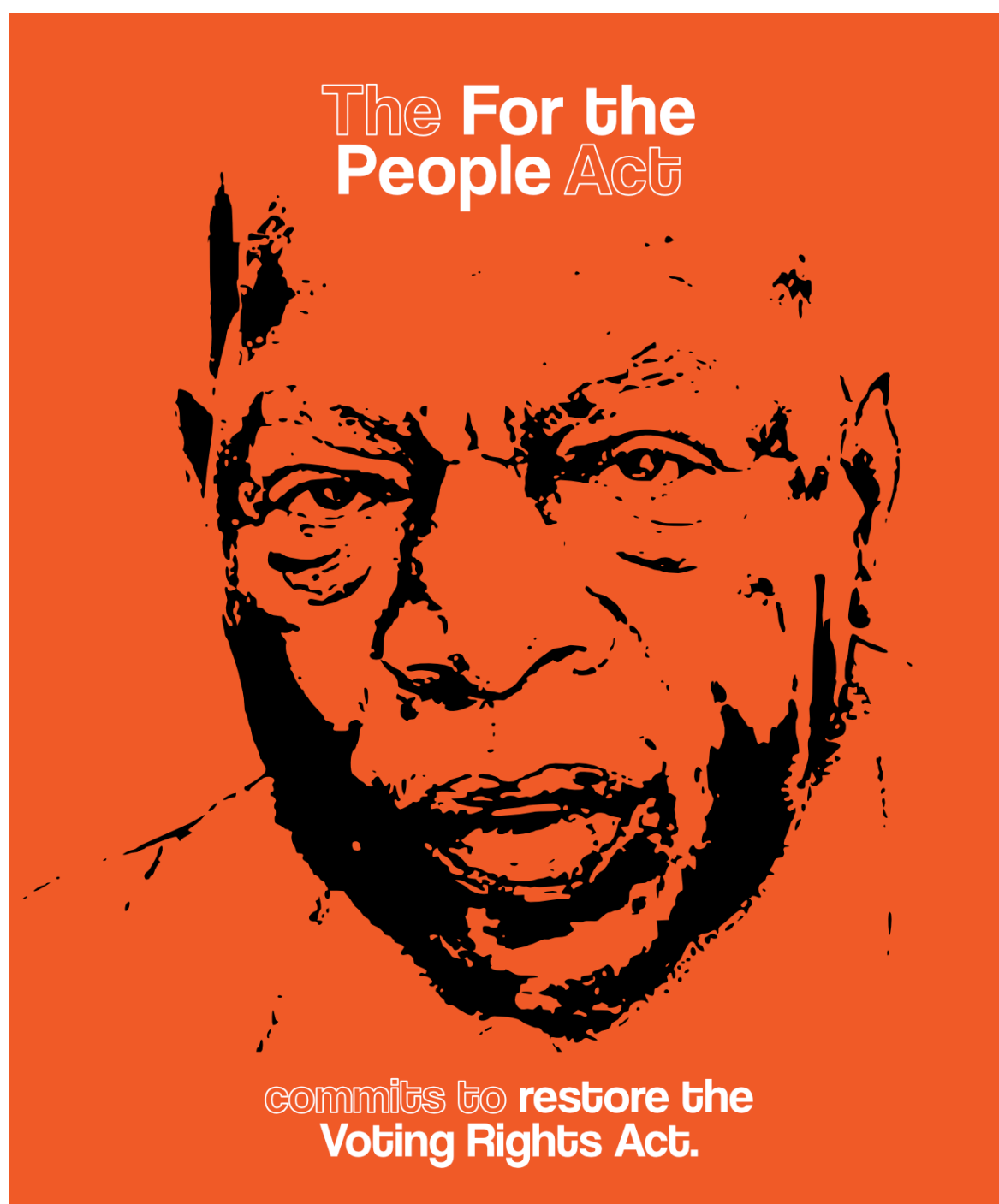
U.S. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell says, "We're going to do everything we can to defeat" the For the People Act. U.S. Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah), says, "It is as if written in hell by the devil himself." McConnell and Republican senators are committed to filibuster the democracy bills, so winning will require working around or reforming the filibuster.

We're on the precipice of winning – but we're not there yet. So, we're making one massive, final push to get this democracy-saving legislation through the Senate and onto the president's desk for his signature.

Public Citizen spearheads the main coalition – consisting of more than 200 groups – pushing for the bill. We're closely coordinating with congressional leaders on strategy. We have organizers working in key states. As we go to press, we just helped lead the way in organizing 150 demonstrations across the country. And we're preparing for a major, national mobilization to put the issue front and center for the country: to highlight the stakes and the moral imperative of action.

The stakes couldn't be higher. Our nation faces the very real risk of a Trumpist resurgence that mixes conspiratorial thinking, cruelty, and cult-like devotion to a Great Leader. It takes legitimate grievance at inequality and concentrated corporate power and misdirects it into racism and xenophobia. The threat is not just political but a real social disintegration. The first, crucial step to head off this prospect is to defend and deepen our democracy. That's exactly what we're going to do. ■

*Robert Weissman*



Graphic courtesy of the Declaration for American Democracy.

on the wrong side of this issue. Now, it is critical that U.S. engagement in WTO negotiations leads to the fastest possible agreement on a waiver text that encompasses all health technologies needed to end the pandemic, including vaccines, test kits, treatments, medical equipment, and personal protective equipment. The pharmaceutical corporations want to protect their monopoly control of supply, in part, because as Pfizer briefed investors in March, they see great profit opportunities in producing annual boosters for sale at much higher prices in rich countries.

Activists will continue to fight both domestically and globally to ensure that the scope of the negotiated waiver text does not only cover vaccines.

The WTO requires its 159 member nations to provide pharmaceutical firms certain monopoly rights in a text called the WTO's Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property or "TRIPS."

These monopoly protections mean that pharmaceutical corporations control where vaccines, tests, and treatments are made and how much is produced.

This is significant because current production capacity can't supply nearly enough vaccines, treatments, or diagnostic tests to meet global needs. Most in low- and middle-income countries will not get vaccinated until at least

2022, and those in the world's poorest countries may have to wait until 2024 for mass immunization, if it happens at all.

As we end the first third of the year, global vaccine production has not reached 1.5 billion doses, while 10-15 billion doses are needed. Creating greater supply capacity is critical, especially because COVID-19 vaccines may be like flu vaccines that must be given regularly, not as a one-time shot.

While Public Citizen's Access to Medicines program has been campaigning for the U.S. government to invest \$25 billion in expanding U.S.

ments, and researchers gain access to the formulas and technology to make vaccines, medicines, and tests to prevent, treat, and control COVID-19. The waiver was proposed by South Africa and India and supported by more than 100 WTO member countries, now including the United States. The scope of the waiver (whether it will cover more than vaccines) is to be negotiated, but the United States' support of a waiver is a critical first step.

In every region of the world, there are firms with the capacity to produce vaccines, treatments, and tests and to greatly increase supply if the formulas and technology are shared. By refusing to voluntarily contract with these firms or issue voluntary licenses to qualified firms so they can invest in creating new production capacity, vaccine originators like Moderna and Pfizer are effectively blocking sufficient supply from being made. Johnson and Johnson (J&J) did arrange a contract with South Africa firm Aspen to make their vaccine, but for months required that 91% of the shots be sent for sale in Europe to fulfill J&J contracts there.

Beginning in January, Global Trade Watch has built escalating pressure on the Biden administration to support the TRIPS Waiver:

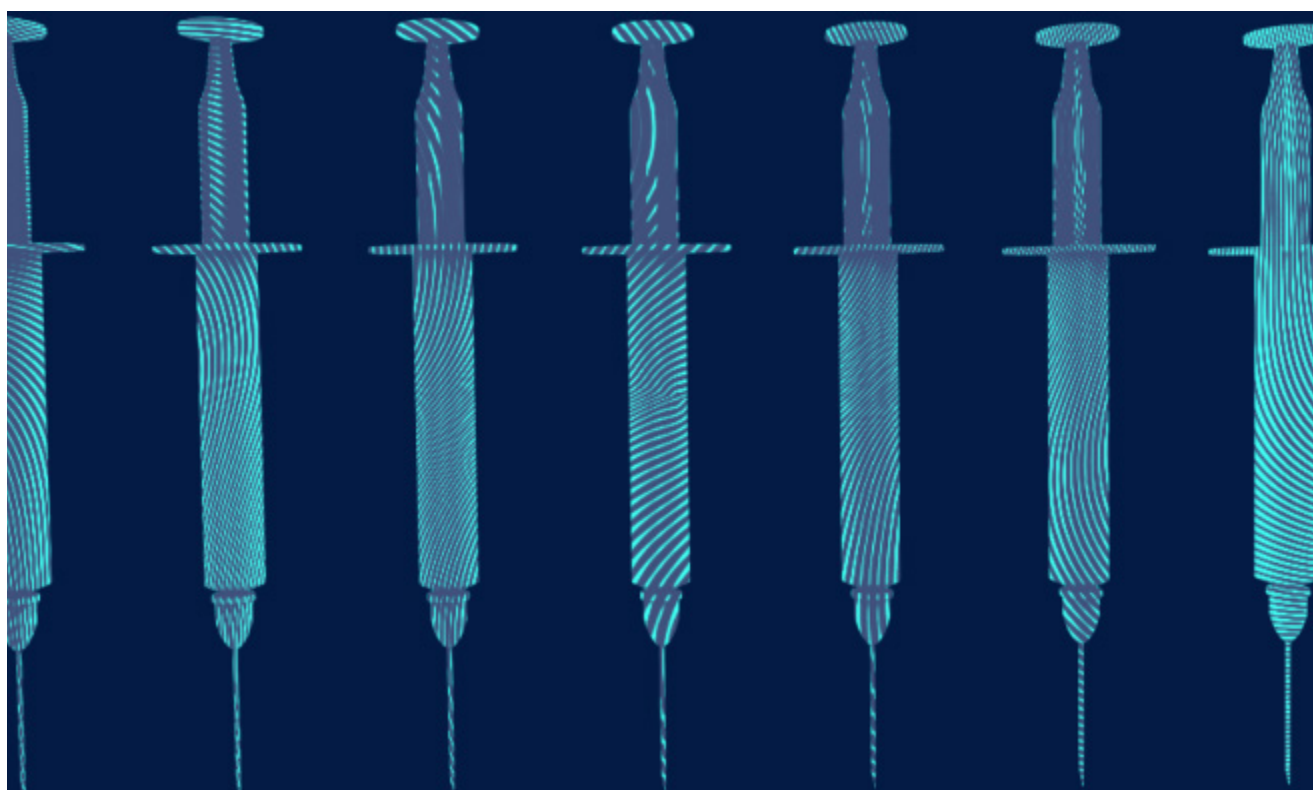
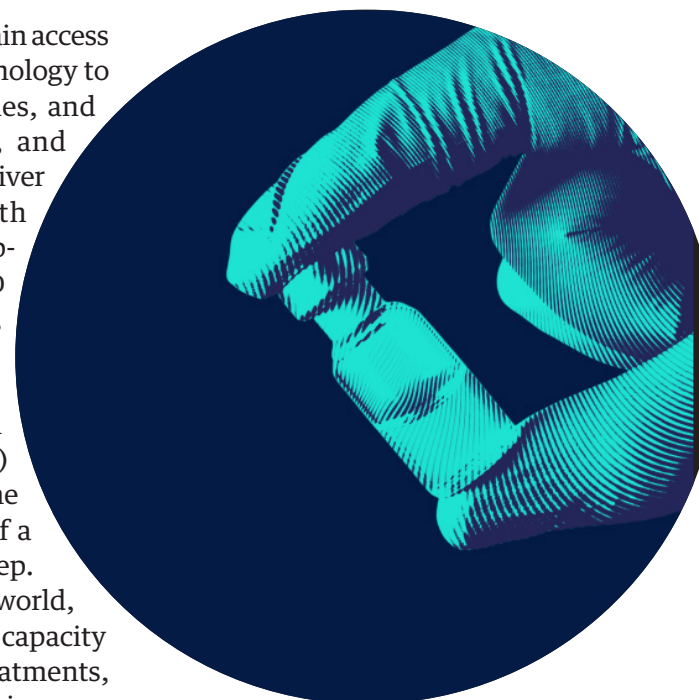
- We spearheaded an organizational sign-on letter, which garnered the support of over 400 U.S. civil soci-

ety groups from Democratic base groups like MoveOn and Indivisible to scores of unions, faith groups, and more.

- We raised awareness among members of Congress, securing 11 U.S. senators and 110 U.S. members of the House in favor of the waiver.
- We organized press conferences and webinars with U.S. Sens. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.), U.S. representatives, and leaders in the global access to medicines fight.
- We performed extensive research and produced fact sheets, backgrounders, memos, and podcast episodes to ensure that activists, civil society leaders, and congressional decision makers are empowered with the information to counter ludicrous Big Pharma talking points.
- We circulated a petition addressed to Biden that, with the help of partners, garnered over 2 million signers.
- In collaboration with partners, we successfully pitched the TRIPS story to *Democracy Now!* and "The Daily Show with Trevor Noah."

Global vaccine apartheid could cost millions of lives, push tens of millions more into poverty and spawn mutated virus variants that evade vaccines.

There can be no end to the public health disaster or economic crises anywhere if people in developing nations are not vaccinated. The latest announcement from the United States is something to celebrate, but the work does not stop here. ■



Graphics courtesy of Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch.

# States Differ in Rates of Physician Disciplinary Actions

BY RHODA FENG

“First, do no harm” is one of the tenets of the Hippocratic Oath. Unfortunately, there is abundant evidence that many patients are negligently injured while being treated by their physicians.

To better protect patients, Public Citizen contends that medical boards should be required by law to use the data in the National Practitioner Data Bank (NPDB) when initially licensing and renewing all physicians’ licenses. Additionally, doctor-specific NPDB background information should be made available to the public.

A new Public Citizen report on state medical board’s disciplinary actions found that Kentucky had the highest rate of serious actions taken against physicians, but 32 states had rates that were less than half that of Kentucky. Kentucky’s higher rate of disciplinary action signifies greater accountability.

“The public deserves to be protected from dangerous doctors,” said Robert Oshel, Ph.D., former associate director for research of the National Practitioner Data Bank and adviser to Public Citizen’s Health Research Group.

“There is no evidence that

**“If all states improved their rates of serious disciplinary actions to equal Kentucky’s, there would be more than twice as many such actions nationally per year, approximately 3,000 instead of 1,466.”**

—Sidney Wolfe M.D., founder, and senior advisor of Public Citizen’s Health Research Group

physicians in any state are, overall, more or less likely to be incompetent or miscreant than the physicians in any other state. Thus, differences in discipline rates between states reflect variations in boards’ enforcement of medical practice laws, domination of licensing boards by physicians, and inadequate budgets rather than differences in physician incompetence.”

The system of licensing medical practitioners was designed to protect the public from physicians who are inadequately trained or incompetent or whose conduct is illegal or abusive towards patients.

Medical practice laws in all states mandate that medical boards, as a part of their important function of responsibly licensing physicians, have the legal obligation to take necessary, appropriate disciplinary actions against licensees known to have injured, endangered, or behaved inap-

propriately or illegally towards patients.

The rate of serious disciplinary actions in Kentucky was eight times higher than in 51st-ranked D.C. Kentucky averaged 2.29 serious disciplinary actions per 1,000 physicians per year, while the District of Columbia had only 0.29 serious disciplinary actions per 1,000 physicians. New Hampshire, Georgia, and South Dakota were only marginally better.

The report is based on information from the NPDB, a national flagging system that also includes information on hospital actions and medical malpractice payments, between 2017 and 2019, the years with the most up-to-date information.

California, the state with the largest number of physicians, also had a low discipline rate, ranking 33rd of the 50 states and D.C., with only 0.85. With 149,206

licensed physicians in California in 2018, a total of 215 more serious disciplinary actions a year would have been taken by the California Medical Board were its rate as high as Kentucky’s serious actions per 1,000 physicians.

“If all states improved their rates of serious disciplinary actions to equal Kentucky’s, there would be more than twice as many such actions nationally per year, approximately 3,000 instead of 1,466,” said Sidney Wolfe M.D., founder, and senior advisor of Public Citizen’s Health Research Group.

“Such improvements in medical board performance would reduce the health risk to thousands of patients currently being injured by the minority of physicians who should not be practicing or should have their practices restricted but are still fully licensed because of inadequate discipline by state medical boards.” ■

# Questions Remain in FDA’s Approval of First Ever COVID-19 Treatment

BY MIKE STANKIEWICZ

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) should convene an external expert advisory panel to evaluate whether the agency’s approval of the antiviral COVID-19 treatment remdesivir should be rescinded, Public Citizen urged in early April.

Developed by Gilead Sciences and federal scientists as a potential treatment for viral diseases such as hepatitis C and Ebola, remdesivir was only first authorized by the FDA for the treatment of hospitalized COVID-19 via an emergency use authorization (EUA) on May 1, 2020 during the early stages of the pandemic.

At the time Public Citizen urged the agency to release all research data supporting Gilead Sciences’ request for emergency authorization to ensure public confidence in the approval decision. In spring of 2020, Public Citizen estimated

that taxpayers contributed at least \$70.5 million to develop the drug, nearly double a previous public estimate of \$37.5 million.

The treatment has proved quite lucrative for Gilead, as the company generated almost \$900 million in the sale of remdesivir in the third quarter of 2020 alone. The FDA formally approved remdesivir for the treatment of serious COVID-19 in October 2020, but many questions remain regarding its effectiveness in treating that disease.

Public Citizen’s new letter to the agency notes that only two of the five trials reviewed by the FDA prior to approval showed that remdesivir reduced the length of hospitalization for a subset of COVID-19 patients, and no trials showed that remdesivir reduced death rates from the disease. The largest trial reviewed by the FDA, which was conducted by

the World Health Organization, showed no benefit of remdesivir in reducing deaths or the length of hospital stays.

Public Citizen concluded that the FDA negligently avoided referring Gilead’s application for approval of remdesivir to the independent experts on its Antimicrobial Drugs Advisory Committee, an action the agency usually takes for important, first-in-class medications, particularly when there is uncertainty about whether a drug is safe or effective.

“The FDA’s failure to convene its own public advisory committee to consider whether to approve remdesivir was inexcusable,” said Michael Abrams, M.P.H., Ph.D., a health researcher in Public Citizen’s Health Research Group, and lead author of the letter. “This failure is particularly troubling given that the agency was aware of evidence from a major clinical

trial that raised substantial doubts about whether the drug provides clinically meaningful benefit.”

The letter requests that FDA Acting Commissioner Janet Woodcock convene a public meeting of the FDA’s Antimicrobial Drugs Advisory Committee to review the agency’s October 2020 decision to fully approve remdesivir, which was already available to patients in the U.S. under an EUA. Public Citizen contends that based on the available evidence regarding the effectiveness of remdesivir, this full approval decision was not justifiable.

Public Citizen concluded the letter by calling on the agency to ask its expert public advisory committee to consider whether approval of remdesivir should be rescinded and whether the drug should be allowed to remain available under a much more limited EUA. ■

# Exposed: Big Tech Tops Corporate Lobbying Spenders

BY DAVID ROSEN

Facebook and Amazon are now the two biggest corporate lobbying spenders in the country, according to a report Public Citizen released in March.

The report, based on data from the Center for Responsive Politics, found that Big Tech has eclipsed two large federal lobbying spenders in recent history: Big Oil and Big Tobacco. Amazon and Facebook spent nearly twice as much as Exxon and Philip Morris did on lobbying in 2020.

“We need to rein in Big Tech’s influence in Washington now, so that lawmakers and regulators can break them up, enact comprehensive privacy legislation, and hold these companies accountable for harming our economy and our democracy,” said Jane Chung, Big Tech accountability advocate for Public Citizen and author of the report.

“The Federal Trade Commission, the Justice Department, and state attorneys general are signaling that justice is finally on its way. But with Big Tech political expenditures at historic levels, it’s more important than ever for lawmakers to show their independence and bring these companies to heel.”

The March report followed on the heels of a similar report Public Citizen released in 2019 (focused on the 2018 election cycle) detailing how Big Tech companies have blanketed Capitol Hill with lobbyists and lavished members of Congress with campaign contributions.

Other key findings from the report:

- During the 2020 cycle, Big Tech companies spent \$124 million in lobbying and campaign contributions, breaking its own records from past election cycles. Amazon’s spending increased by 30%, and Facebook’s spending jumped an astounding 56%.
- Facebook, Amazon, Google, and Apple together added 40 new lobbyists in the 2020 cycle, up from 293 in 2018 to a new total of 333.
- Big Tech political action committees (PACs), lobbyists, and employees contributed at least 33% more in the 2020 cycle than they did in 2018 – an

increase of over \$4 million, and a total of nearly \$16.5 million in contributions. This is the largest cycle-to-cycle increase in contributions from Big Tech since Public Citizen began monitoring the industry in 2010.

- And among members of Congress with jurisdiction over privacy and antitrust issues, 94% received money from a Big Tech corporate PAC or lobbyist. In 2020 alone, Big Tech PACs and lobbyists contributed more than \$3 million to the lawmakers tasked with overseeing and regulating them.

Just hours after the report was released, U.S. Rep. Ken Buck (R-Colo.), ranking member of the U.S. House Judiciary’s Subcommittee on Antitrust, Commercial, and Administrative Law, announced that he would no longer accept campaign donations from Facebook, Google, or Amazon – a victory for Big Tech accountability.

Public Citizen’s report was covered in *Politico*, *The Hill*, *Bloomberg*, *Business Insider*, and several tech outlets, and it drummed up significant buzz

among top journalists, antitrust advocates, and tech influencers active on social media.

The report was released the day before a hearing by the House Energy and Commerce Committee, in which several Big Tech CEOs were grilled by lawmakers in both parties for more than five hours.

The hearing focused on the role of social media platforms – particularly Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube (owned by Google) – in spreading misinformation and harming children. Both Democrats and Republicans on the committee were visibly furious at Big Tech’s abuses of power and vowed to pass legislation confronting them.

“The Big Four have learned to use their concentrated wealth to entrench their economic power through political engagement,” said Lisa Gilbert, executive vice president for Public Citizen. “In this moment of enhanced scrutiny, tech companies are going to spend millions and dial through their Rolodexes looking for officials to stop regulation and legislation needed to protect consumers. That is simply unacceptable.”

Public Citizen is calling for Big Tech companies to shut down their PACs immediately, end all super PAC contributions, end

all contributions to dark money groups for electioneering, end all spending to influence elections at the state and local level, and fully disclose how much and to which intermediaries they contribute.

A closely related problem is the revolving door between Big Tech and government. Public Citizen recommends requiring former executives and lobbyists who enter government to recuse themselves from official actions that affect former employers for up to two years; prohibit government officials from negotiating future employment with private businesses that are affected by their official actions; and clear all waivers of conflict-of-interest regulations through a single agency – the Office of Government Ethics – and make the request and approval or denial a matter of public record.

Public Citizen also is advocating for a series of lobbying reforms that would expand the number of individuals who count as registered lobbyists and require far greater disclosure of lobbying activities. Finally, Public Citizen is pushing the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission to move forward with a rule requiring corporations to disclose their political activity. ■



Graphic courtesy of Bret Thompson.

► **Suppression**, from page 1

“The Corporate Sponsors of Voter Suppression.” Meanwhile, industry trade groups have contributed another \$36 million to these state legislators.

The anti-voter bills included in the report’s analysis would do such things as shorten early-voting periods, cancel voting on Sundays, severely constrain mail-in voting, reduce the number of drop boxes for ballots, criminalize the act of providing food and water to voters waiting in line, and even authorize the state legislature to overturn the results of a presidential election.

The bills hearken back to one of the most shameful chapters in American history: the Jim Crow era of legalized discrimination when, among other horrors, barriers were created to prevent Black Americans from voting. The proposed voting restrictions are cloaked in a rhetoric of deterring voter fraud. But this rationale is a ruse, as cases of voter fraud are extremely rare, a fact well known to supporters of voter suppression measures. Donald Trump himself established a commission during his presidency to document cases of voter fraud; he then abruptly shut down the commission after its search came up empty.

State legislators are pushing at least 361 such voter suppression bills in all but three states, according to tracking by the Brennan Center for Justice.

“Corporate leaders cannot credibly claim to love America while also giving contributions to lawmakers who are supporting thinly veiled attempts to sup-

press the vote, especially among people of color,” said Public Citizen Executive Vice President Lisa Gilbert. “The only acceptable action for corporations to take is to stop giving to supporters of these bills, forever.”

AT&T has given the most to supporters of state-level voter suppression bills, at more than \$811,000. AT&T is followed by Altria / Philip Morris (\$679,000), Comcast (\$440,000), UnitedHealth Group (\$411,000), Walmart (\$377,000), State Farm (\$315,000), and Pfizer (\$308,000). Additional well-known corporations among the top supporters of voter suppression bills include the infamous billionaire-owned Koch Industries (\$293,000), the multinational beer company Anheuser-Busch (\$265,000), telecom giant Verizon (\$246,075), and auto manufacturer

General Motors (\$185,100).

Among members of the Fortune 100, 81 companies have contributed to these lawmakers, giving a combined total of \$7.7 million.

After the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol at least 123 companies paused their PAC contributions either to those who objected to the electoral college vote or to all federal candidates, according to a CNN tracker. Public Citizen noted at the time that any measures short of lifetime bans on donations to federal level disenfranchisers likely amounted to nothing more than PR stunts.

The same logic applies to any corporation condemning these voter suppression bills at the state level, as some have already done in Georgia and Arizona. Disavowing these bills now will amount to a meaningless gesture if corpora-

tions continue to bankroll the bills’ supporters with future campaign contributions.

Three-fourths of the companies that paused some or all political contributions in response to the Jan. 6 insurrection contributed to state legislators who are supporting voter suppression legislation. In total, these 94 companies – including AT&T, Comcast, United Health Group, and Walmart – contributed \$7.3 million over the three most recent election cycles.

The days in which corporate America can fund politicians and then claim no responsibility for their actions may be coming to an end. Corporations seeking to demonstrate their reverence for our democracy could best do so by ending their attempts to influence the outcomes of elections at the federal and state levels. ■



Graphic courtesy of Bret Thompson.



*A Benefit for Public Citizen’s Democracy Protection Campaign*

*Thursday, June 24, 2021 at 6 p.m. EDT*

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denced most startlingly in the high number of Americans with no or inadequate insurance.

Racial health disparities, including access to care, have led to disproportionate deaths in communities of color due to COVID-19, reflecting similar disparities before the pandemic. The U.S. also has the highest rate of unmet need of any comparably wealthy country, with one-third of Americans reporting that they or a family member has avoided going to the doctor when sick or injured in the past year due to cost.

“The pandemic has shown how wide the gaps in our health care system remain and how easy it is for families to fall through them. Millions of Americans were already suffering unnecessarily prior to the pandemic and this

disease just exacerbated the challenges people face,” said Eagan Kemp, Public Citizen’s health care policy advocate.

Under Medicare for All, no American would have to skip care because they couldn’t afford it and no employee, nor their families, would need to worry about losing their coverage if they lose their job.

Hospitals would receive the funds they need to stay open via yearly budgets instead of relying on admission rates and elective procedures. People of color also would no longer face disproportionately high rates of uninsurance, reducing an important contributor to racial disparities in access to health care.

“We need to be prepared for the next pandemic, and we can’t be under the current

for-profit system that prioritizes profits over people,” added Kemp.

Despite the clear benefits of Medicare for All, the U.S. remains the only one of the 25 wealthiest countries to not provide universal health care, and the health care system’s focus on profits over patients’ health has cost Americans their lives.

These startling realities have renewed the urgency for Medicare for All, and Public Citizen is mobilizing with Congressional allies and activists across the country to build the movement we need to win.

On March 17, U.S. Reps. Pramila Jayapal (D-Wash.) and Debbie Dingell (D-Mich.) introduced the Medicare for All Act of 2021 at a virtual town hall, where Robert Weissman, president



Graphic courtesy of Bret Thompson.

of Public Citizen, was a featured speaker.

“Amid the worst acute public health crisis in generations, the current insurance system failed massively,” Weissman said. “Millions lost their health insurance and health insurer profits soared. Hospitals and providers, operating with just-in-time systems and investments oriented to expensive treatments rather than public health, were less well equipped to absorb the pandemic demands than they should have been.”

Public Citizen has supported single-payer health care since its founding nearly 50 years

ago. In addition to Medicare for All, Public Citizen has been pushing to improve and expand Medicare as part of the needed stimulus packages currently being debated.

Ahead of President Joe Biden’s American Families Plan, Public Citizen, along with almost 50 other groups, called on the president and Congressional leadership to include bold drug pricing reforms in the package, which would save \$450 billion in 10 years, and then to use those savings to improve Medicare by adding dental, vision, and hearing benefits as well as adding an out-of-pocket cap on expenses and

lowering the eligibility age to 50.

“Far too many Americans have lost their insurance or put off needed care due to the COVID-19 crisis,” said Melinda St. Louis, Public Citizen’s Medicare for All campaign director. “Expanding Medicare to every American will better protect us against the next pandemic and save countless American lives. Through grassroots organizing in cities, towns, and counties in red, blue, and purple states, we are bringing new local officials, businesses, unions, and members of Congress into our Medicare for All movement.” ■

**“Amid the worst acute public health crisis in generations, the current insurance system failed massively. Millions lost their health insurance and health insurer profits soared. Hospitals and providers, operating with just-in-time systems and investments oriented to expensive treatments rather than public health, were less well equipped to absorb the pandemic demands than they should have been.”**

**—Robert Weissman, Public Citizen president**



Graphic courtesy of James Yang.

# Corporate Prosecutions Plunged to 25-Year Low Under Trump

BY RHODA FENG

Corporate impunity swelled to record levels during President Trump's final year in office, a new Public Citizen report has found. The number of federal prosecutions of corporate criminals fell to just 94 in 2020 – the lowest on record since the government started tracking corporate prosecution statistics in 1996 – while corporate leniency agreements increased to 45, the highest in Trump's four years.

The report covers the government's 2020 fiscal year and is based on an analysis of federal corporate prosecution data from the U.S. Sentencing Commission and the Corporate Prosecution Registry, a joint project of Duke University and the University of Virginia that tracks criminal enforcement actions against corporations.

"As profit-maximizing, risk-calculating organizations, big corporations are highly responsive to incentives and punishments," said Robert Weissman, president of Public Citizen. "If corporations know they can commit crimes and – if caught – be required to do little more than promise not to violate the law in the future, it is a virtual certainty they will break the law regularly and routinely."

Because of the simultaneous trends of declining corporate prosecutions and increasing corporate leniency agreements (i.e., deferred prosecution agreements and non-prosecution agreements), the agreements made up nearly one-third (32%) of all resolutions of federal cases against corporations accused of crimes. This is the highest the percentage has ever been since 1996, when prosecutors entered leniency agreements with corporate criminals only about 1% of the time.

Corporate prosecutions have fallen by two-thirds from the peak of 296 in 2000. The previous record low was 2018, when 99 corporations were prosecuted. The decline in prosecutions means that only 94 corporations were prosecuted either pled or were found guilty of crimes in 2020. Corporations whose egregious wrongdoing was settled via leniency agreements with the U.S. Justice Department (DOJ) instead of prosecution include:

- Chipotle, a national restaurant chain whose food safety violations sickened over 1,000 customers;

- Novartis, a pharmaceutical corporation whose subsidiaries broke antitrust and anti-corruption laws;
- HSBC, a London-based multinational megabank whose Swiss subsidiary helped wealthy U.S. citizens evade tax obligations for a decade (this is HSBC's third leniency agreement from the DOJ since 2012);
- JPMorgan Chase, a New York-based multinational megabank whose precious metals traders engaged in fraudulent activity over eight years (this is JPMorgan's fourth leniency agreement from the DOJ in less than 10 years);
- Monsanto, a Bayer-owned agrichemical corporation that improperly stored hazardous pesticide waste; and
- Wells Fargo, whose executives over more than a decade pushed impossible sales goals on thousands of employees, who faced discipline or firing for not meeting goals, resulting in predatory and fraudulent sales practices that victimized millions of customers.

"Trump's DOJ is infamous for pursuing a cruel 'tough on crime' approach to immigrants and low-level offenders," said Rick Claypool, a Public Citizen research director and author of the report. "It also should be infamous for letting corporate criminals off the hook. President Biden's DOJ should ramp up enforcement to show that corporate criminals are not above the law."

## Restoring Corporate Criminal Accountability

Under the Trump administration, Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein allegedly told prosecutors to bring immigration cases against families with young children – the "zero tolerance" anti-immigration policy that resulted in federal agents separating thousands of immigrant children from their parents, hundreds of which were never reunited. Attorney General William Barr reportedly told prosecutors to consider bringing criminal seditious charges against Black Lives Matter protestors – and reportedly considered prosecuting Seattle's mayor for resisting harsh enforcement against protests.

The DOJ's cruelty to low-level

offenders looks even worse when juxtaposed with its leniency to corporate offenders. Senior DOJ officials ordered staff investigators and prosecutors to stand down in criminal cases against Walmart for opioid dispensation violations, Monsanto for illegally storing hazardous waste, Royal Bank of Scotland for its role in the 2008 financial crisis, and Caterpillar for tax evasion, and reduced a civil penalty against British bank Barclays for its role in the financial crisis by billions.

"This leniency toward the biggest multinational corporations sends the unmistakable message that the powerful are above the law," said Weissman. "It is not, as Trump likes to say, 'law and order.' It is two-tiered justice. If we want corporations to follow the law, then it's past time to do away with deferred and non-prosecution agreements."

Public Citizen advocates a number of additional progressive reforms to hold corporate criminals accountable. The Biden administration has already started rolling back some of the Trump DOJ's worst enforcement policies. For example, Biden's acting chief of DOJ's Environment and Natural Resources Division (ENRD) rescinded the Trump ENRD chief's enforcement policies, which, if kept in place, would have brought additional burdens to prosecuting corporate polluters.

To make sure that corporate criminals are brought to justice, here are a few Trump DOJ policies

Biden and Garland should rescind:

- Preemptively rewarding corporate criminals with ways to avoid prosecution;
- Reducing corporate penalties by eliminating payments to third parties that help right corporate wrongs; and
- Limiting the DOJ's power to bring charges against corporations that defraud the government.

Additionally, there are policy reforms the Biden administration should implement to strengthen the DOJ's ability to hold corporate criminals accountable. These include:

- Reassert the prioritization of holding individuals accountable in corporate cases;
- Release an annual DOJ report and public database on corporate crime;
- End the practice of negotiating leniency agreements with corporations;
- Corporations that plead or are found guilty should be automatically debarred from government contracts; and
- End "Too Big to Jail" by breaking up criminal corporations and monopolies.

In order to serve and protect the public, the Department of Justice must engage in robust reforms to protect Americans from corporate criminals and assert that no one is above the law – not even the biggest businesses or most well-connected executives. ■



Graphic courtesy of Taylor Gallery.

# Building Resilience Centers in Houston

BY MICHAEL COLEMAN

When temperatures tumbled into the single digits for five days in Texas in February, the state's electrical grid failed, leaving 4 million people shivering in the dark.

At last count, nearly 200 people died in the catastrophe, most of them from hypothermia. In the aftermath of the tragedy, politicians and energy industry officials began pointing fingers and assigning blame, but Public Citizen's Texas office went to work on proposals to protect Texans.

At the Texas Legislature this year, Public Citizen lobbied for bills that would increase investments to reduce energy demand in communities across the state and force the fossil fuel industry to weatherize their infrastructure. We're also advocating for innovative community resilience centers to give Texans — especially the most vulnerable — shelter in storms to come.

A bill, H.B. 4090, introduced by U.S. Rep. James Talarico (D-Texas), would award grants or loans guarantees to entities that invest in solar energy and energy storage at facilities that can be used to provide "essential community services" such as free water, food, shelter, medical care, and other help during disasters.

Kaiba White, Public Citizen's energy policy and outreach specialist in Austin, said the deadly Texas freeze jump-started civic discussions about protecting people during episodes of dangerous weather, whether it be extreme heat or cold, fires, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, or other life-threatening events.

"We are urging our state and local governments to put funding toward solar energy with battery backup at key facilities to help communities during emergency situations," White said.

"These energy upgrades can be used for multiple purposes to get the most value from the investment. In addition to creating resilience hubs at local government and school buildings, it may also make sense to provide low-cost loans for nonprofits and other private entities to install solar and batteries in exchange for agreeing to provide free essential community services during emergencies."

The Austin City Council has already directed the city manager to begin planning for so-called "resilience hubs" in Texas' capital city. The idea is for a resilience hub to be located within a 15-minute walk of most residences because driving is unsafe during some emergencies, such as snow and

ice storms.

The resilience hubs would provide people with a temporary place to sleep, eat, get water, charge their phones, receive basic medical care, and more. In addition to local solar power that doesn't rely on the notoriously unreliable Texas power grid, facilities could collect rainwater to be stored on-site if water services are interrupted as they were during this year's Texas freeze.

Andy Tate, a spokesman for Austin, said in a written statement that executing the shelter plans will require new spending, but the city is committed to following through.

"City staff have produced a number of climate resiliency recommendations, with many projects in various stages of implementation," Tate said.

DeeDee Belmares, Public Citizen's climate justice organizer in San Antonio, said she will initiate conversations with officials in Texas' second largest city to potentially use older, vacant city properties as community resilience centers.

"Resilience hubs are being planned in cities around the nation to help communities prepare for extreme weather events," Belmares said. "Winter Storm Uri left more than 300,000

people in San Antonio without electricity and water for days. It also showed us that the city and our utility companies were not prepared for a storm this size. It is now up to community organizations and grassroots groups to take ownership of their neighborhoods and make plans to protect residents for heat waves or ice storms."

Public Citizen also supports efforts to build community resilience centers in Houston. Stephanie Thomas, Public Citizen's Houston researcher and community organizer, noted that Resilient Houston, the citywide resilience plan signed into effect by Mayor Turner in 2020, calls for solutions to help mitigate dangers presented by the climate crisis and other upheaval in Houston communities.

Houston is among American cities hit hardest by the crisis, especially increasingly frequent and ferocious hurricanes.

"Houstonians have been hit by disaster after disaster, leaving the most vulnerable community members to struggle time and again to rebuild their lives," Thomas said. "Resilience hubs are one solution among many to give support to communities when these extreme weather events occur." ■

## Contractors Armed with Lobbyists Raked in COVID Cash

BY DAVID ROSEN

Just 6% of the companies that received federal contracts to provide products and services to address the pandemic lobbied the federal government in 2020, but these companies received more than half of the money.

That's the finding of a report released in April co-authored by Public Citizen and the Center for Responsive Politics.

"The striking share of COVID dollars that went to contractors who engaged in federal lobbying raises questions about whether the work of professional influencers figured into procurement decisions," said Lisa Gilbert, executive vice president of Public Citizen. "These findings point to the need for greater oversight to ensure that contracts were issued on the basis of merit, not connections."

The correlation between lobbying and contracts was even greater for those that lobbied

**"When it came to selling goods and services to the federal government to address the crisis in 2020, vendors were far more likely to be chosen if they supplemented their offers of assistance with visits from their lobbyists."**

—Taylor Lincoln, research director for Public Citizen

either the Trump administration or their awarding agency on COVID-related issues. Only 2% of contract recipients fell into this group. They received 37% of the money, \$13.4 billion. Together, these companies dispatched more than 3,500 lobbyists to Capitol Hill, federal agencies, and the White House in 2020, the report found.

"Findings like these raise larger questions — not only about whether money had undue influence on government contracts during a national crisis, but also whether this happens under normal circumstances," said Sheila Krumholz, executive director of the Center for

Responsive Politics — the leading research group tracking money in U.S. politics. "To what degree do the billions spent annually on lobbying skew policies and decisions away from the greater good on a systemic level? This study is a good place to start examining that question."

The PACs and employees of companies that lobbied their awarding agency or the White House on COVID issues gave \$313 million in campaign contributions to former president Donald Trump, members of Congress, and party committees from the 2016 to 2020 election cycles.

Recipients of nearly \$400 million in ventilator contracts

and more than \$50 million in COVID testing contracts lobbied the government for the first time ever in 2020.

"Quelling the rampaging coronavirus demands the best resources our country has to offer. But when it came to selling goods and services to the federal government to address the crisis in 2020, vendors were far more likely to be chosen if they supplemented their offers of assistance with visits from their lobbyists," said Taylor Lincoln, research director for Public Citizen and co-author of the report.

Among COVID contract recipients, a Silicon Valley data see **Contractors**, page 13 ►

# Financial Regulation an Essential Tool for Fighting Climate Crisis

BY DEANTE WASHINGTON

Reform and regulation in support of financial stability are essential elements of the Biden administration's whole-of-government approach to fighting climate change in an equitable way, according to a new report offering detailed recommendations for U.S. regulators ahead of the Financial Stability Oversight Council's first-ever meeting to discuss climate risk.

The "Climate Roadmap for U.S. Financial Regulation," a report from Public Citizen and Americans for Financial Reform Education Fund outlines how Biden appointees can protect investors, workers, and the economy from the escalating risks caused by the climate crisis, while also shifting the regulatory framework towards one that promotes the transition to a low-carbon future. The roadmap was developed in partnership with ClimateWorks Foundation and draws on contributions from dozens of leading financial reform experts.

The 35-page report notes that racial equity and justice need to be a central element in regulators' approach to climate risk. And that effective mitigation of climate

**"Wall Street is gambling against our future and putting the health of our communities and economy at grave risk. Given the urgency of the climate crisis, we can't afford continued inaction."**

—David Arkush, managing director of Public Citizen's Climate Program

risk requires effective regulation of finance generally, including ensuring that rules cover all financial actors, not just some of them.

"Wall Street is gambling against our future and putting the health of our communities and economy at grave risk. Given the urgency of the climate crisis, we can't afford continued inaction," said David Arkush, managing director of Public Citizen's Climate Program. "Financial regulators already have an obligation to protect us from Wall Street's risky bets and this roadmap is designed to help them act immediately, using all the tools currently at their disposal."

The report is a comprehensive compendium of actions the federal government can take, starting with decisions on key presidential appointments and staff. It provides an extensive discussion of how banking and insurance regulators and supervisors across many federal agencies can do

their part. It also outlines a framework for sensible capital market regulation that enables investors to invest their values on climate as well as account for climate risk.

The Climate Roadmap for U.S. Financial Regulation underscores the need for financial regulators to immediately and publicly recognize climate change as a systemic risk and demonstrate their commitment to incorporating that risk into financial regulation.

They also need to safeguard low-income communities and communities of color, which are typically hit first and worst by climate harms. If financial regulators aren't careful, the same communities could face additional harm from financial services being priced too high or denied outright.

In March, after U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry indicated that the private sector, rather than government, will lead the fight against

the climate crisis, 145 organizations, including Public Citizen, sent a letter urging Kerry to end "the flow of private finance from Wall Street to the industries driving climate change around the world — fossil fuels and forest-risk commodities."

The letter argues that demonstrating climate leadership on a global scale requires ending "financing of fossil fuels and deforestation around the world by U.S. firms and entities."

Taken together, the letter and report make the case for regulators to commit to bold and timely action in taking on the climate crisis.

"At its next meeting, the FSOC should take the concrete steps we recommend in the Climate Roadmap. There's still time to act, but no more time to delay," said Alex Martin, senior policy analyst of Americans for Financial Reform Education Fund. ■



Illustration courtesy of Olive Ayhens.

► **Contractors**, from page 11

firm whose founder and chairman served on Trump’s 2016 transition team received more than \$40 million. The founder also was a business partner of Trump’s son-in-law Jared Kushner, who reportedly ran a shadow COVID task force.

A North Carolina textiles company that had previously

received just one very small government contract received nearly \$600 million in contracts for protective wear and other supplies. The company hosted then-Vice President Mike Pence a year earlier for a speech, and its CEO is a major Republican donor.

A vendor that received \$50 million in contracts from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs was represented by a former chairman

of the U.S. House Veterans Affairs committee who also served as an informal spokesman for Trump during the 2016 presidential campaign.

“Why did so many companies feel the need to engage lobbyists to secure contracts to sell these goods and services? Did the government award contracts based on merit or based on connections? And were contractors with potentially

valuable products and services able to receive a fair hearing if they did not back up their pitches with lobbyists’ visits?” asked Mike Tanglis, research director for Public Citizen and co-author of the report. “The public deserves the maximum amount of information possible to be reassured that the money is being spent wisely, and that recipients of COVID contracts are chosen fairly.” ■

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## IN THE SPOTLIGHT

The following are highlights from our recent media coverage.

**Robert Weissman, Public Citizen president**

**On the Pentagon budget being too high:** *Common Dreams*. **On U.S. Rep. Debra Haaland's (D-N.M.) nomination:** *Electrek*. **On President Biden's proposal to raise taxes on the wealthy:** *Common Dreams*.

**Lisa Gilbert, executive vice president**

**On the return of earmarks:** *The Washington Post*, *The Hill*, *Roll Call*. **On Big Tech's lobbying:** *POLITICO*. **On passing the For the People Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Act:** *CNN*. **On corporations sidestepping their pledges to stop GOP donations:** *The Hill*. **On lobbyists' making money off the COVID-19 pandemic:** *Open Secrets*. **On Joe Biden's infrastructure proposal:** *The Hill*.

**Lori Wallach, director of Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch**

**On property rights' barriers to the COVID-19 vaccine being morally wrong:** *The Washington Post*, *Common Dreams*, *The Intercept*, *The Observer*. **On the potential for Rahm Emanuel becoming ambassador:** *The Nation*. **On the World Trade Organization (WTO) intellectual property rights waiver for the COVID-19 vaccine:** *Bloomberg*, *TruthOut*, *Times of India*. **On the WTO's hyperglobalization:** *Common Dreams*.

**Dr. Michael Carome, director of Public Citizen's Health Research Group**

**On Janet Woodcock's nomination to lead the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA):** *Politico*, *BMJ*. **On the (FDA) reducing drug inspections during the pandemic:** *The New York Times*. **On Biogen's Alzheimer drug:** *Pharma Manufacturing*, *Fierce Biotech*. **On Pfizer's tanezumab drug:** *STAT*.

**Peter Maybarduk, director of Public Citizen's Access to Medicines Program**

**On wealthy countries creating a COVID-19 vaccine apartheid:** *The Guardian*. **On the Federal Trade Commission's (FTC) plan to increase scrutiny of drug company mergers:** *Inside Health Policy*. **On the global COVID-19 vaccine distribution:** *CounterSpin*, *Common Dreams*. **On vaccine production speed:** *Real News Network*. **On Biden's vaccine donations to Mexico and Canada:** *Common Dreams*. **On the EU considering a vaccine patent:** *El Diario*. **On the TRIPS**

**Waiver:** *The Economic Times*. **On getting rid of COVID-19 patents:** *Common Dreams*. **On Biden leading a global vaccine manufacturing program:** *Between the Lines*. **On the introduction of a prescription bill in the U.S. Senate:** *Portland Local News*, *The Lund Report*. **On The U.S. needing to produce more vaccines for the world:** *Common Dreams*.

**Adrian Shelley, director of Public Citizen's Texas office**

**On Texas energy officials' corruption:** *The Washington Post*. **On climate deniers in Texas' oil and gas industry:** *Gizmodo*. **On Texans' increased investment in solar and battery-powered electricity after the disaster:** *Bloomberg Green*. **On Texas' oil and gas producers after the winter storm:** *The Texas Tribune*. **On the Electric Reliability Council of Texas' (ERCOT) refusal to release their preparation documents before the winter storm:** *The Texas Observer*. **On ERCOT after the storms:** *The Texas Tribune*. **On Texas lawmakers considering a bill to make it harder to sue trucking companies over accidents:** *The Texas Standard*, *KERA News*, *The Dallas Morning News*.

**David Arkush, managing director of Public Citizen's Climate Program**

**On the role of regulators in Biden's climate agenda:** *Reuters*. **On how John Kerry should enlist Wall Street's help in fighting the climate crisis:** *Common Dreams*, *Red*, *Green and Blue*.

**Craig Holman, government affairs lobbyist with Public Citizen's Congress Watch division**

**On former Biden staffers:** *Business Insider*. **On Trump's worsening of ethics codes:** *The Cap Times*. **On weatherizing power generators in Texas:** *Houston Chronicle*. **On the Trump campaign's donation ploy:** *The Daily Magazine*. **On North Carolina Republican campaign donations:** *The News & Observer*.

**Public Citizen Litigation Group**

**On the U.S. Supreme Court's case involving donor disclosure tax breaks:** *NPR*, *New York Nonprofit Media*. **On how standing doctrine impedes cases' progress:** *The National Law Journal*. **On Cardona's announcement to cancel student loan debt for scammed students:** *Common Dreams*.

FOR YOUR ENTERTAINMENT: Public Citizen Crossword

Answers, page 16 ▶

Our True Color BY JIM QUINLAN

Across

- 1. \*The epitomy of rarity
- 5. \*Violet Beauregarde turns into one in Willy Wonka's factory
- 10. \*Kind of stock
- 14. "Veep" actress Chlumsky
- 15. Nebraska district that went for Biden in November
- 16. Like some juicy steaks
- 17. Gumshoes, in old crime fiction
- 18. "That's fantastic!"
- 19. Famous \_\_ (cookie brand)
- 20. Lock of hair
- 22. Mix, as paint
- 23. Show signs of exhaustion
- 24. Some remote batteries
- 26. San Francisco's \_\_ Hill
- 28. Cuomo's charge (abbr.)
- 29. Norm, Cliff, Frasier, and Lilith at "Cheers" e.g.
- 34. What a definition defines
- 36. Flat tire's need
- 37. Praise highly
- 39. Abounds (with)
- 42. \*Twangy style of music featuring the banjo
- 44. \*Team player from Toronto
- 45. \*Navy pilot putting on a show
- 46. Mister in Mexico
- 47. Colorado resort

- 49. Fresh sounding animal?
- 50. Went platinum?
- 52. The coronavirus, or Black Lives Matter, e.g.
- 54. Kit \_\_ bar
- 56. Champ, to Joe Biden
- 58. Request
- 59. Quite a bit
- 61. Obnoxious kid
- 64. Like an aggressive personality
- 68. Emulate a bedbug
- 69. Grammatical no-no
- 71. Sound like Winthrop in "The Music Man"
- 72. Racetrack shape
- 73. Start of many a college course
- 74. "Oh woe is me!"
- 75. \*Showy wildflower
- 76. \*Irving Berlin song of 1926 covered by Willie Nelson in 1978
- 77. Like Arizona, Nevada, Georgia, Wisconsin, Michigan, and Pennsylvania in 2020, or a word that is missing from the answers to the starred clues

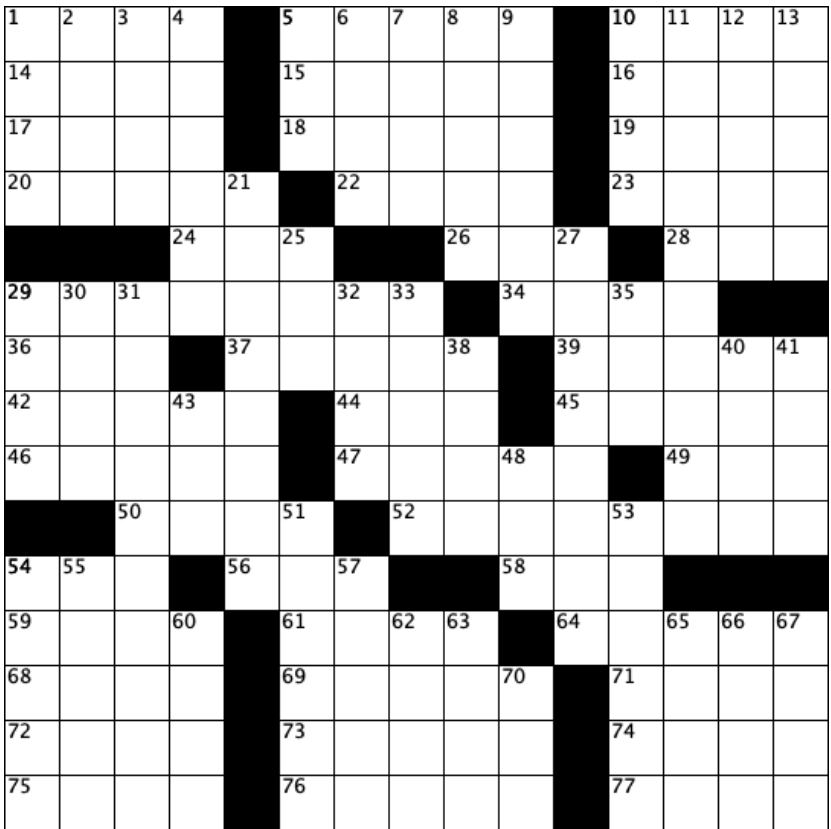
Down

- 1. Groening of "The Simpsons"
- 2. Unique individual, slangily
- 3. " \_\_ Upon a Time in Hollywood"
- 4. Capital of The Bahamas

- 5. Winner of four World Series in this century, on scoreboards
- 6. Australian avians
- 7. Attentive, and then some
- 8. River through Deutschland
- 9. Peter of Peter, Paul and Mary
- 10. "Oh fudge!"
- 11. Breakfast staple at a diner
- 12. O. Henry specialty
- 13. Annoyances
- 21. Professional pitcher?
- 25. Lisa Simpson plays it
- 27. Plant manager?
- 29. \_\_ to riches
- 30. Dublin's land

- 31. The whole amount, including ax
- 32. Indian chief
- 33. /
- 35. Stimp's animated pal
- 38. There's one in this clue
- 40. What scanning a QR code at a restaurant might bring up these days
- 41. Pivot around an axis
- 43. What makes the Impossible Burger possible
- 48. "What's your \_\_?" ("When are you gonna get here?")
- 51. Waste
- 53. Bygone space station

- 54. Meat on a skewer
- 55. Not dead
- 57. Feature of an elephant
- 60. Show's partner
- 62. Pro's counterpart
- 63. Ripped up
- 65. Jagged Little \_\_ (Broadway musical last performed 3/12/20)
- 66. Jacob's biblical twin
- 67. Recessed area in a church
- 70. Thumbs-down responses



Jim Quinlan constructs the crossword gratis. Public Citizen appreciates his generous contribution.

Public Citizen Recommends ...

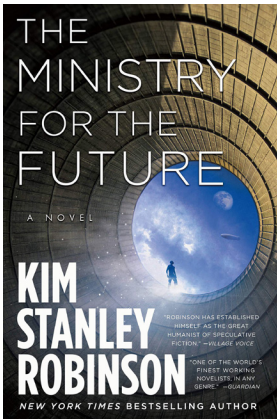
'The Ministry for the Future' By Kim Stanley Robinson; \$28.00; Orbit Books

I love a good dystopian or post-apocalyptic science fiction novel. But these days, bleak visions of the future are increasingly difficult to differentiate from the real-world bleakness we witness week in and week out. Against this backdrop, Kim Stanley Robinson's latest novel, "The Ministry for the Future," offers a welcome, hopeful vision. It's a science fiction novel that imagines how we, as a society and as a world, might plausibly overcome our environmental death spiral and save future generations by transi-

tioning to a post-carbon economy. In the novel, the Paris Climate Agreement's authority is used to create a new international agency dedicated to advocating on behalf of future generations to come. This is the Switzerland-based Ministry for the Future. Mary Murphy, a former Irish diplomat, ably oversees the ministry's multinational staff of ecologists, litigators, economists, technology experts, and others, all dedicated to pushing governments, central banks, and businesses to make the necessary changes. While the novel is, at its core, a hopeful story, it does not sugar-

coat the challenges of the transition away from carbon. The overheating planet triggers catastrophes that kill millions and devastate millions more who become climate refugees. Corporations and the U.S. government actively resist change. Countries engage in rogue acts of geoengineering. Terrorist groups seek vengeance for climate-caused mass deaths, retaliating with deadly acts of sabotage. Murphy, the head of the Ministry, is both kidnapped by a radical who is impatient with the pace of change and targeted by assassins employed by those who wish to prolong the rule of fossil fuels. Rather than undermining the message, the horrors and struggles Robinson imagines only make the eventual outcome seem more plausible. Throughout the book, we experience events through multi-

ple points of view, from scientists attempting to repurpose oil industry technology toward pumping Antarctic seawater up to the tops of glaciers to executives at Davos who mock efforts to discourage their businesses' greed. The main throughline is the story of Mary Murphy as she repeatedly runs up against limits of her agency's authority and persuasive capacity. Her meetings with central bankers are particularly frustrating – and high stakes. She persists, and her example demonstrates the tremendous value of repeatedly pushing for essential policy changes, even when success seems impossible. Because if there's one thing I've learned during my years at Public Citizen, it's that years of struggle are often an essential, if frustrating, prelude to eventual wins. ■ – Rick Claypool To order books, contact the publisher or visit your local bookstore or library.



# The Need for a Global Vaccine Manufacturing Program

BY RHODA FENG

Public Citizen and 65 other global health, development, and humanitarian organizations in April called on President Joe Biden to announce and implement a global vaccine manufacturing program to end the pandemic and build a globally-distributed vaccine infrastructure for future pandemics.

“Much more ambitious U.S. leadership is needed to end the global pandemic,” said Peter Maybarduk, director of Public Citizen’s Access to Medicines program. “The U.S. government should establish, urgently, a manufacturing operation for the world, that would share vaccine recipes and work with the World Health Organization to alleviate suffering and bring billions of additional vaccine doses to humanity.”

The People’s Vaccine Alliance, a movement of health and

humanitarian organizations, has endorsed the letter. Some of the largest U.S.-based international groups, FHI360, International Rescue Committee, Helen Keller International, and International Medical Corps, as well as advocacy organizations including RESULTS and PrEP4All, also have signed onto the letter.

The letter noted the only way to get the pandemic under control is to immediately ramp up vaccine production across the world. The group requests Biden announce a new manufacturing program in his fiscal year 2022 budget and help produce billions more vaccine doses within one year. The U.S. can do so for about \$3 a dose, a fraction of the cost of inaction, according to the coalition. Without a global manufacturing plan, the economic costs to the U.S. alone could be between \$800 billion to \$1.4 trillion in 2021 alone.

The letter came ahead of a fundraising conference, hosted by Secretary of State Antony Blinken, for the COVAX facility which is dedicated to increasing equitable global access to COVID-19 vaccines.

“Given the increasingly connected nature of today’s world and the risks that we consequently share, it is vital that we act proactively and decisively to address those risks,” said Nancy Aosse, president and CEO of International Medical Corps. “The U.S. has the intellectual and financial resources necessary to help lead this initiative, working across borders with other governments, and with international health agencies, to end this and future pandemics.”

“Vaccine donations alone won’t end the pandemic,” said Abby Maxman, Oxfam America CEO. “The commitments planned for COVAX are critically important, and yet entirely inadequate to

meet global need. Without urgent new manufacturing commitments, billions of people may wait years for a vaccine.”

The groups added that the U.S. government should not only expand production in the U.S. and abroad, but also work with the World Health Organization (WHO) to set up production hubs in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. These hubs would democratize production and improve global health security, particularly if they are accountable to the public and equipped with adaptable technologies, such as mRNA platforms, that could help defeat the next pandemic.

“The U.S. government has helped produce hundreds of millions of vaccine doses for people living in the U.S., on a relatively short timeline. The same is needed – and within reach – for all countries,” Maybarduk added. “The key missing ingredient is ambitious political leadership, to end the pandemic for everyone, everywhere.” ■



Supporters hang signs commemorating family and friends who have died of COVID-19 at the Rally for Vaccine Access for Everyone, Everywhere on May 5 in Washington, D.C. Photo courtesy of Eric Kayne/AP Images for Social Security Works.

## Crossword Answers



## IN THE NEXT ISSUE...

Public Citizen lays out a roadmap for increasing global mRNA vaccine production.

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70	4.7%	\$470	4.2%	\$420
75	5.4%	\$540	4.6%	\$460
80	6.5%	\$650	5.4%	\$540
85	7.6%	\$760	6.5%	\$650
90 and over	8.6%	\$860	8.2%	\$820

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