

IMPORTANT LAWS ENACTED DURING THE 115TH CONGRESS OF 2017-18

David R. Mayhew, 1/1/19

This writeup follows in the vein of my pieces on previous Congresses. As before, I rely where possible on newspaper wrap-ups—that is, lookback assessment pieces published at the midpoints and closings of congressional years—to gauge whether enactments pass an importance test. Did the wrap-up journalists seem to treat them as having been stand-out important? Important, that is, in being seen as both innovative and (likely) consequential? Entailed are moves away from the policy status quo, whatever that status quo might be. As before, I list in CAPITAL LETTERS a very few enactments that the accounts treated as super-important, not just important. In this report, these are the first two items listed for calendar 2017. This wrap-ups methodology has gotten harder in recent times. Older generations of reporters who pioneered the wrap-up genre have chiefly retired, at great cost to the genre. Sizeups at the closes of Congresses have gotten rarer and more haphazard. During 2017-18, a focus of all-Trump-all-the-time does not seem to have helped. Worst yet, the traditional wrap-ups more or less disappeared in calendar 2018, and I had to improvise, as will be seen below. For 2018, I keep relying on newspapers stories, but chiefly ones written about enactments at their time of passage.

I have other new wrinkles for this Congress. First, in two cases I have coded as a single “law” something that in fact sprawled its official enactment dates across two years, to encompass 2018 as well as 2017. In previous such reviews, following the content of journalistic coverage, I have sometimes scooped more than one official enactment into one reported “law” if the items seemed to amount to a package. A “law” can be a family-pack of associated substance. Sometimes the reporting goes that way. But it is a new thing to let such a package extend across calendar years. Here, one of these cross-year melds is the staggered financing of relief for some awful natural disasters. That money came in three doses during 2017 and 2018. The other meld entails the surprising use of the Congressional Review Act of 1996 to repeal a group of sixteen Obama-era executive orders, fifteen of the repeals coming in 2017 yet one in 2018.

Yet regarding these CRA enactments, here is second kind of wrinkle. The sixteen CRA repeals seemed to invite special treatment. A CRA repeal resembles an ordinary statute in requiring passage by both houses and a presidential signature, but enjoys a special immunity from amendments and filibustering, thus allowing quick action by majority rule. CRA repeals are a special kind of law. What to do with a bunch of them? As an analogy, think of the package of rare earths in the periodic table. Here, I have coded the sixteen CRAs as just one enactment, to which, in recompense, I assign a capital-letter status. All told, the sixteen items added up to a big deal, and a single-shot coding may understate their importance, although to aggrandize them into a list of sixteen separate stand-alone acts wouldn’t make much sense.

Laws for calendar 2017:

TAX REFORM. Biggest structural overhaul of the tax system since 1986; lower rates for many individuals; a narrower estate tax; corporate rate slashed from 35% to 21%; mortgage-deduction made less valuable for many upscale homeowners. (December)

SIXTEEN EXECUTIVE REGULATIONS REPEALED THROUGH USE OF THE CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW ACT (CRA). Topics include mining and drilling, education, public lands, family-planning funds, consumer protection, environment, worker safety, web privacy, auto dealers. (See dates and details below, including for the 16th and last of the items, which was enacted in calendar 2018)

Reform of Department of Veterans Affairs. The Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act to shorten wait times and allow easier firing of employees. (June) (see details and references below)

Disaster relief totaling some \$140 billion. For Hurricanes Harvey (Texas and Louisiana) and Maria (Puerto Rico), and western wildfires. Voted in three installments: \$15 billion in September 2017, \$36.5 billion in October 2017, nearly \$90 billion in February 2018. (See details below.)

Repeal of the Affordable Care Act's individual mandate. As an ingredient of the December 2017 tax reform bill. (See details below)

Authorization of Arctic drilling in Alaska. As an ingredient of the December 2017 tax reform bill. (See details below)

Laws for calendar 2018. (See below for references on each item.)

Abandonment of spending caps established by the Budget Control Act of 2011. Curtains for the "sequester." \$80 billion more for defense, \$63 billion for domestic policy. (February)

Relaxation of Dodd-Frank regulations regarding small banks. (March)

Reform of Veterans Affairs Department to allow privatization of care. (June)

Opioid Crisis Response Act of 2018. (October)

Five-year \$867 billion agriculture and food-stamps package. (December)

Criminal justice reform. The First Step Act, to overhaul sentencing rules and reduce incarceration. (December)

General wrap-up assessments relied on for calendar 2017 (mid-year and end-of-year):

- Michael D. Shear & Daren Yourish, "Trump Claims He's No. 1 in Bills Signed: The Facts Support a Veto," NYT, 7/18/17, pp. A1, A14.
- Christina Marcos & Scott Wong, "Frustrated House GOP to begin five-week recess," The Hill, 7/28/17
- Matt Viser, "So far, GOP in Congress is all talk, little action," Boston Globe, 7/30/17, pp. A1, A8.
- Shawn Zeller, "Amid GOP Disunity, A Few Wins," Roll Call, 8/1/17
- Victoria McGrane, "Trump driven to erase all things Obama," Boston Globe, 12/17/17, pp. A1, A14
- Rich Lowry, "Trump's first year is starting to look like a big win," NYPost, 12/18/17
- Alexander Bolton, "The Hill Interview: McConnell: 2017 a great year for GOP," The Hill, 12/18/17
- Gary Varvel, "Trump's successes have been underreported," Indystar, 12/19/17
- Joe Williams, "Tax Overhaul Caps What Congressional Republicans Say Is Successful Year," Roll Call, 12/20/17
- Michael D. Shear & Michael Tackett, "Savoring a Major Win in a Year of Setbacks; G.O.P Exults as Congress Delivers a Tax Overhaul," NYT, 12/21/17, pp. A1, A14
- Louise Radnofsky & Kristina Peterson, "Trump, GOP Reset After Tensions; Republicans cheer tax overhaul as evidence of a new relationship following a rocky start," WSJ, 12/23-24/17, pp. A1, A4
- Sheryl Gay Stolberg, "In Congress, G.O.P. Makes Its Mark: Conservative Wins Come After a Chaotic Start," NYT, 12/25/17, pp. A1, A16
- Fred Barnes, "The GOP Triumphs of 2017," Weekly Standard, 1/22/18, p. 13

On the tax reform of December 2017:

- Richard Rubin, Siobhan Hughes & Kristina Peterson, "GOP Falls in Line Behind Tax Bill," WSJ, 12/23/17, pp. A1, A5
- "Tax Vote Seals Victory for Trump," several stories, WSJ, 12/21/17, pp. A1, A4, A5
- Stephen Ohlemacher & Marcy Gordon, "It's a done deal: Congress wraps up massive tax package," AP, 12/20/17

Some details, dates, and sources on the use of Congressional Review Act in 2017 and 2018:

- Cecilia Kang, "Senate Votes to Overturn Web Privacy," NYT, 3/24/17, p. A1
- John D. McKinnon, "Privacy Provision Eases for Telecom," WSJ, 3/29/17, p. A3
- Jennifer Steinhauer, "Bill Targeting Planned Parenthood Clears Senate," NYT, 3/31/17, p. A11
- Noah Weiland, "Senate Votes to Roll Back 'Auto I.R.A.' for Workers," NYT, 3/31/17, p. B1
- Michael D. Shear, "Trump Discards Obama Legacy, One Rule at a Time," NYT, 5/1/17. "Mr. Trump has used the review act as a regulatory wrecking ball, signing 13 bills that erased rules on the environment, labor, financial protections, internet privacy, abortion, education and gun rights."

--Jena MacGregor, "House Republicans just voted to change overtime rules for workers," DCPPost, 5/2/17

--Rachel Witkowski, "Dodd-Frank Rollback Under Way," WSJ, 3/7/17, p. B1

--Kimberly Kindy, "How Congress dismantled federal Internet privacy rules," DCPPost, 5/30/17

--"House backs legislation to undo most of Obama's landmark banking reforms," Guardian, 6/8/17

--Michael D. Shear & Karen Yourish, "Trump Says He Has Signed More Bills Than Any President, ever. He Hasn't," NYT, 7/17/17. "That effort to undo regulation involved 15 new laws, which were the result of an aggressive push... Those new laws could result in a significant shift in the way government regulates employee benefits, worker safety, the environment, public lands and education."

--Drew DeSilver, "Congressional productivity is up—but many new laws overturn Obama-era rules," Pew Research Center, 8/29/17

--Jessica Silver-Greenberg, "Sparing Banks, Senate Repeals Litigation Rule," NYT, 10/25/17, p. A1.

--Rena Merle, "Wall Street wins big as Senate votes to roll back regulation allowing consumers to sue their banks," DCPPost, 10/24/17

--Jordain Carney, "Pence breaks tie to nix Obama-era consumer arbitration rule," The Hill, 10/24/17

--"The Great Rules Rollback: Reining in regulation is a major success of Trump's first year," WSJ editorial, 12/26/17. "Congress...helped with unprecedented use of the Congressional Review Act (CRA) to nullify 14 Obama-era rules and one Consumer Financial Protection Bureau rule promulgated under Richard Cordray.... The 2017 list includes a regulation that would have imposed onerous disclosure requirements on mining and drilling companies operating overseas... Congress also nixed rules on education, public land and the use of family-planning funds," 12/26/17, p. A14

--Alan Rappeport, "House Votes to Dismantle Bias Rule in Auto Lending," NYT, 4/9/18, p. B5

References on reform of Department of Veterans Affairs in calendar 2017:

--Lisa Rein, "Effort for fast-track rules on firing VA workers gains bipartisan momentum," DCPPost, 5/12/17

--Sean Higgins, "Senate passes VA reform bill," DCExaminer, 6/6/17

--Michael D. Shear & Karen Yourish, "Trump Claims He's No. 1 in Bills Signed. The Facts Support a Veto," NYT, 7/18/17, pp. A1, A14. The Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblowing Protection Act "which will allow officials to remove bad employees and promote whistle-blowing, passed in response to a scandal over manipulating patient wait times. The new law puts in place long-sought changes to overhaul management of the department and improve health care and benefits for veterans..... Another bill that Mr. Trump signed extended an Obama-era program that allows some veterans to see private doctors, and streamlined the way their deductibles and co-pays get processed... A third new law allows community policing grants to be used to hire and train veterans to be officers."

--Sean Zeller, "Amid GOP Disunity, A Few Wins," Roll Call, 8/1/17. "In June, Trump signed a law that makes a bipartisan win: a measure responding to the scandal at Veterans Affairs Department hospitals, where dying veterans were left waiting for appointments. The law

makes it easier to fire VA employees for poor performance and for whistle-blowers to come forward.”

References on funding for disaster relief in 2017 and 2018:

--Sheryl Stolberg, “As Harvey Ebbs, Congress Has Opening to Try New Approach: Bipartisanship,” NYT, 9/4/17, p. A15

--Laura Litvan & Erik Wasson, “Senate Passes Debt-Limit Deal Trump Struck With Democrats: Bill includes \$15.25 billion for victims of Hurricane Harvey,” Bloomberg, 9/7/17

--Thomas Kaplan & Michael D. Shear, “As Conservatives Grouse, House Passes Disaster Aid and Debt Limit Package,” NYT, 9/9/17, p. A16

--Mike DeBonis & Kelsey Snell, “House sends \$15 Harvey aid package to Trump despite boos, hisses from Republicans,” DCPPost, 9/8/17

--Andrew Taylor, “Senate pushes hurricane relief bill: Measure would aid Puerto Rico, Texas, Florida,” Boston Globe, 10/24/17, p. A3

--Ed O’Keefe, “Congress approves another round of hurricane, wildfire funding,” DCPPost, 10/24/17. Total of \$36.5 billion emergency spending plan. Centers on Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico. Covers western wildfires, northern CA drought, flood insurance.

--Thomas Kaplan, “\$36.5 Billion Aid Package Receives Senate Approval,” NYT, 10/25/17, p. A13

--Andrew Taylor, “GOP disaster aid plan is \$81b: Nearly twice Trump’s request,” Boston Globe, 12/20/17, p. A6

--Sarah Ferris, “Mammoth disaster aid package could languish for weeks: The far-reaching bill, with huge sums for FEMA, housing and public works programs, nearly doubles the White House’s own disaster request last month,” Politico, 12/21/17

--CW Weekly, 1/29/18, report on House roll call of 12/21/17: “The will would authorize \$81 billion in aid for ongoing response and recovery from 2017 hurricanes and wildfires...”

--Mike DeBonis & Erica Werner, “The House passes spending, disaster measures Thursday to avert shutdown,” DCPPost, 12/21/17. “The House....quickly voted on a separate \$81 billion disaster relief bill to aid victims of recent hurricanes and wildfires.” But the Senate didn’t approve this bill during calendar 2017, holding it over.

--Erica Werner & Mike DeBonis, “Sweeping budget deal would add \$400 billion in federal spending, end months of partisan wrangling,” DCPPost, 2/7/18. “...and about \$90 billion more would be spent on disaster aid for victims of recent hurricanes and wildfires.”

--Thomas Kaplan, “Senate Leaders Agree to a Deal to Lift Spending,” NYT, 2/8/18, p. A1, A15. “It also includes almost \$90 billion in disaster relief in response to last year’s hurricanes and wildfires.”

--see also December wrapup by Stolberg in NYT 12/25/17.

Repeal of the ACA’s individual mandate, December 2017. There is agreement in the December end-of-session wrap-ups that this repeal merits special mention as an important, stand-alone policy change that had been sought by the Republicans for many years. As part of the tax package, it could pass as a reconciliation item immune from Senate filibustering. Besides the wrap-up stories, the coverage included:

--"The Appeal of Mandate Repeal: Killing the ObamaCare tax will make it easier to restore insurer subsidies," WSJ editorial, 11/16/17, p. A16
--Peter Sullivan, "Senate GOP repeals ObamaCare mandate," The Hill, 12/2/17
--Robert Pear, "Without the Insurance Mandate, Health Care's Future May Be in Doubt," NYT, 12/19/17, p. A17
--Joanne Kenen, "The stealth repeal of Obamacare," Politico, 12/19/17
--"Congress repeals ObamaCare mandate, fulfilling longtime GOP goal," The Hill, 12/20/17
--Christiano Lima, "Trump boasts of individual mandate repeal in GOP tax bill," Politico, 12/20/17

Authorization of Arctic drilling, December 2017. Same politics, stakes and scenario as with the individual mandate repeal. Besides the general wrap-up stories, the coverage included:
--"Alaska Drilling Dividend: The tax bill contains a growth bonus in new oil lease sales," WSJ editorial, 12/1/17, p. A22
--Carl Hulse, "Arctic Drilling, Stymied for Decades, Makes Surprise Return in Tax Bill," NYT, 12/10/17, p. 22
--Kim Heacox, "Alaska's Arctic national wildlife refuge now has a \$1b price tag on it," Guardian, 12/20/17
--Henry Fountain & Lisa Friedman, "What's Next for the Arctic Refuge?" NYT, 12/21/17, p. A21

General Wrap-up Assessments for Calendar 2018? That is, serious assessments casting back through all, or at least half, of the calendar year? I couldn't find any in the newspapers. A venerable reporting tradition seems to have eroded away in calendar 2018. It was trumped by Trump. My fallback here is to focus on the coverage of particular enactments at the times they passed (and, in a few fugitive instances, on later lookbacks at them), with an eye for coverage that was ample in volume and that played up the significance of what was being enacted.

References on breaking the 2011 spending caps, February 2018

--Joe Williams, "Senate Leaders Strike Budget Deal," Roll Call, 2/7/18
--Erica Werner & Mike DeBonis, "Sweeping budget deal would add \$400 billion in federal spending, end months of partisan wrangling," DCPost, 2/7/18. "The budget deal would increase discretionary spending—the government functions year-to-year through congressional appropriations—by 21 percent over existing budget caps. Those caps are rooted in a 2011 agreement...."
--Kristina Peterson & Siobhan Hughes, "Senators Close In On a Budget Deal," WSJ, 2/7/18, pp. A1, A4. "The emerging agreement is expected to increase military spending by \$80 billion a year and nondefense spending by \$63 billion a year...." This "would likely be the first spending agreement to boost federal spending above two sets of limits established in the Budget Control Act. In an effort to rein in federal spending, lawmakers in 2011 agreed to impose spending caps and tasked a group called the supercommittee to find additional cuts. When that group failed to reach an agreement, a second, more stringent set of cuts briefly

went into effect in 2013, known as the sequester.” “Since then, Congress has passed two separate two-year deals preventing the sequester cuts from kicking in, but have kept federal spending below the more generous Budget Control Act caps. But the emerging budget deal, which would lift spending by roughly \$143 billion each year, would bust both sets of caps.”

--Thomas Kaplan, “Senate Leaders Agree to a Deal to Lift Spending; Bid to End Standoffs; Nearly \$300 Billion More for Domestic Policy and the Military,” NYT, 2/8/18, pp. A1, A15.

“The accord...would raise strict caps on military and domestic spending that were imposed in 2011 as part of a deal with President Barack Obama that was once seen as a key triumph for Republicans in Congress.”

--“The Guns and Butter Budget: Democrats exact a high price for agreeing to boost the military,” WSJ editorial, 2/8/18, p. A16. “The budget outline would lift defense spending by \$80 billion in fiscal 2018 and \$85 billion in 2019, honoring a central GOP campaign promise. This busts the ‘sequester caps’ that forced useful restraint on domestic accounts for a few years but damaged the military and did nothing on entitlements.”

--Neil Irwin, “G.O.P. Grants a Liberal Fiscal Wish. The Left Has Misgivings,” NYT, 2/11/18, p. 18. “The fiscal austerity that drove the budget deficit from around 9 percent of G.D.P. in 2010 to 3 percent in 2016 has, for practical purposes, been abandoned. First, Republicans passed a \$1.5 billion tax bill in December that sharply cuts rates on businesses. [That was the big tax reform package of December 2017.] Then last week they made a deal to undo budget caps demanded by the Republican House in 2011.”

--“A Consequential Congress: The 115th has the best record of center-right reform since 1994-1995,” WSJ editorial, 11/2/18, p. A14. “Congress ended years of sequestration cuts that had damaged the military more than any enemy in the field.... The Senate Democratic price for even a modest two-year defense increase was increases on domestic accounts....”

References on rollback of Dodd-Frank banking regulation, May 2018:

--Alan Rappeport, “Republican Bill Curtails Reach of Bank Rules: Rollback Has Support of Some Democrats,” NYT, 1/16/18, pp. A1, A13

--Burgess Everett, Elana Schor & Zachary Warmbrodt, “Schumer struggles to quell Warren-led rebellion: Senate Democrats are feuding over legislation to roll back the Dodd-Frank law—and the minority leader is caught in between,” Politico, 3/14/18

--Tracy Jan, “The Senate is poised to roll back rules meant to root out discrimination by mortgage lenders,” DCPPost, 3/12/18

--Erica Werner & Renae Merle, “Senate passes rollback of banking rules enacted after financial crisis,” DCPPost, 3/14/18

--Andrew Ackerman, “Senate Passes Bill Easing Banking Rules,” WSJ, 3/15/18, p. A3

--Andrew Ackerman, “House GOP Won’t ‘Rubber Stamp’ Senate Banking Bill,” WSJ, 3/16/18, p. A5

--Alan Rappeport & Emily Flitter, “Congress Eases Banking Curbs Set After Crisis: Bipartisan Rollback Is a Victory for Trump,” NYT, 5/23/18, pp. A1, A12

--Ryan Tracy & Andrew Ackerman, “Bill Eases Small-Bank Rules: Congress passes less-ambitious plan than first sought by Trump; keeps much of Dodd-Frank,” WSJ, 5/23/18, pp. A1, A2.

--"The Art of a Banking Deal: Congress eases the Dodd-Frank pain on non-giant banks," WSJ editorial, 5/24/18, p. A16
--Erica Werner & Renae Merle, "Congress approves plan to roll back post-financial-crisis rules for banks," DCPPost, 5/22/18

References to VA overhaul, May 2018:

--Lindsey McPherson, "All of a Sudden, A Rush House Floor Schedule," Roll Call, 5/14/18
--Lisa Rein, "Congress sends massive VA overhaul to Trump's Desk," Boston Globe, 5/24/18, p. A7. "The Senate on Wednesday gave overwhelming approval to a massive bill that expands access for veterans to private doctors at taxpayer expense, sending President Trump a victory that helps cement one of his biggest campaign promises." "The \$55 billion package makes a five-year commitment to address shortcomings in the country's largest health system...." "The Congressional Budget Office estimates that as a result of the VA Mission Act, an additional 640,000 veterans each year would go outside the system. "
--Dave Boyer, "Trump sees Congress buck tradition of legislative loafing, makes significant progress on agenda: Legislation includes Dodd-Frank overhaul, reforms Veterans Affairs services and a 'right to try' measure," Washington Times, 5/28/18
--Donovan Slack, "Trump signs VA law to provide veterans more private health care choices," USA Today, 6/6/18
--Ben Kesling, "Trump Signs Legislation to Overhaul VA: New law changes way veterans get private-sector care and closes underused facilities," WSJ, 6/7/18, p. A4

References on Opioid Crisis Response Act of 2018:

--Abby Goodnough, "What a Bipartisan Opioid Bill Includes (and Omits)," NYT, 9/27/18, p. A15. "The House and Senate have reached agreement on a big package of measures to address the opioid epidemic. The legislation is a rare bipartisan achievement that lawmakers are eager to have in hand when they go home to campaign in the midterm elections." "The 653-page bill contains a mix of law enforcement and public health measures, including one that aims to block deadly fentanyl from being imported through the mail and one that will allow more nurses to prescribe medication for opioid addiction. Another provision would make it easier for Medicaid recipients to get inpatient care for substance abuse over the next five years."
--Glenn Fleishman, "Kavanaugh Has Broken Congress. So How Did It Just Pass a Bunch of Bipartisan Budget and Spending Bills?" Fortune, 10/4/18. "Congress is absolutely, positively broken, with a split across party lines that may never be bridged. So how did the House and Senate just pass a bill to fund efforts to fight the illegal opioid trade and treat those addicted by 98-1 and 393-8 vote, respectively? It's a mystery. But the Opioid Crisis Response Act is the latest in a series of bills, largely budget related, that have passed both chambers and been signed by President Trump...."
--Joshua Jamerson, "Bipartisanship Obscured by Court Fight," WSJ, 10/5/18, p. A4. "Also on Wednesday, the Senate advanced an opioid bill to President Trump's desk by a vote of 98 to 1. That bill includes several changes to Medicare and state Medicaid programs, such as requiring Medicare to cover services provided by certified opioid treatment programs."
--Abby Vesoulis, "Opioid Bill Shows Congress Can Still Work Together," Time, 10/6/18

--Alexandra Hein, "Trump signs bipartisan opioid bill aimed at curbing national crisis," Fox News, 10/24/18. "President signed a sweeping bipartisan bill into a law on Wednesday aimed at making medical treatment for opioid addiction more widely available while also cracking down on illicit drugs being sent through the mail."

--Marianna Sotomayor, "Trump signs sweeping opioid bill with vow to end 'scourge' of drug addiction," NBC News, 10/24/18. "a sweeping legislative package that lawmakers and public health experts believe will help curb the growing crisis in the United States."

References to five-year agriculture package, December 2018:

--Andrew Duehren & Jesse Newman, "Congress Close to Deal on Farm Bill," WSJ, 11/29/18.

--Jeff Stein, "Deal to pass farm bill scraps House GOP plan for new food stamp work requirements," DCPost, 11/29/18

--"The GOP's Food-Stamp Failure: Pat Roberts kills even modest work rules in the farm bill," WSJ editorial, 12/9/18, p. A16.

--Catie Edmondson, "Senate Passes Farm Bill, Minus Food Stamp Curbs," NYT, 12/12/18, p. A18. "...an ambitious \$867 billion measure that rejected stricter work requirements for food-stamp recipients that were pushed by House Republicans and cheered by President Trump. The twice-a-decade legislation provides a safety net for farmers hit with unexpected weather or by tariffs, as well as to low-income Americans struggling to feed themselves and their families."

--Helena Bottemiller Evich & Catherine Boudreau, "Farm bill headed to Trump after landslide House approval," Politico, 12/13/18

--Jeff Stein, "President Trump Signs \$867 billion farm bill into law," DCPost, 12/20/18

--Sarah Binder, "The shutdown is just the finale. Here are five takeaways from the Republican Congress's chaotic 2018," DCPost Monkey Cage, 12/20/18. "The end-of-session chaos bumped two major accomplishments from the headlines: the passage of major criminal justice reforms and a renewal of agricultural programs, which included funding for SNAP, the country's largest anti-hunger program."

References on criminal justice reform, December 2018:

--"Nicholas Fandos & Maggie Haberman, "Trump Embraces a Path to Ease U.S. Sentencing: A Bipartisan Proposal That Would Unwind Tough-on-Crime Rules of Years Past," NYT, 11/15/18, pp. A1, A18

--Jamiles Lartey, "Criminal justice reform bill headed for vote after McConnell comes off fence: Announcement is a major legislative victory for both progressive reform advocates and Donald Trump, who endorsed the bill," Guardian, 12/11/18

--Annie Karni, "Bipartisan Criminal Justice Bill Had Stalled, Until Kushner Stepped In," NYT, 12/15/18, p. A17

--"Criminal justice reform: A first step: A measure to reduce incarceration slightly looks set to become law," Economist, 12/15/18, p. 27

--"Criminal Justice Advances: The Senate will take up a bill that learns from GOP state experience," WSJ editorial, 12/17/18, p. A18

--Osita Nwanevu, "The Improbable Success of a Criminal-Justice-Reform Bill under Trump," *New Yorker*, 12/17/18

--Vivial Ho, "Criminal justice reform bill passed by Senate in rare bipartisan victory: First Step Act, a landmark bill which would reduce drug crime sentences, saw support from both progressives and law-and-order conservatives," *Guardian*, 12/19/18

--Natalie Andrews, "House Passes Justice Reform," *WSJ*, 12/21/18, p. A6

--Adam Shaw & Judson Berger, "Trump signs criminal justice reform bill," *Fox News*, 12/21/18

--Sarah Binder, "The shutdown is just the finale. Here are five takeaways from the Republican Congress's chaotic 2018," *DCPost Monkey Cage*, 12/27/18. "The end-of-session chaos bumped two major accomplishments from the headlines: the passage of major criminal justice reforms and a renewal of agricultural programs...."