

GUEST VIEWS

Trump guts Endangered Species Act

The Trump administration announced reckless and potentially devastating new rules Monday that will weaken the Endangered Species Act, which currently bestows a mantle of protection over 1,663 species of animals and plants. Of those, 1,275 are considered endangered and close to extinction. Another 388 are listed as threatened—the polar bear is one—and at risk of becoming endangered.

In the 46 years since it was signed into law by President Richard Nixon, the Endangered Species Act has protected imperiled wildlife and brought many species back from the brink of extinction. The law is credited with saving such species as the bald eagle (which recovered sufficiently to be delisted), as well as the California condor and the grizzly bear, both of which are still considered endangered. So are the right whale, the San Joaquin kit fox and the rusty patched bumblebee.

The new rules come in the wake of a report from the United Nations earlier this year that more than 1 million plants and animals around the world face extinction, some within decades, owing to human development, climate change and other threats.

Since it became law in 1973, the act has required that the decision to list an endangered or threatened species must be made on the basis of scientific criteria without reference to the decision's possible economic effects. The administration's new rule removes that language, clearing the way for cost-benefit analysis to be considered in the process. Although some officials suggested that economic impacts would be considered only for informational purposes, it is nevertheless a giant concession to industries that have long complained about having to make excessive accommodations because of the law.

Also, the act has always protected species designated as endangered from being "taken," meaning that they can't be killed or maimed or harassed. A threatened species got the same protection, except in the case of a special rule specifying otherwise. The new rules remove that automatic protection for threatened species, unless there is a specific rule written. (So the presumption has been reversed; the exception has become the rule.)

It's unconscionable—and dangerous—to be removing protections at a time when scientists warn that a million species could become extinct. The new rules should be legally challenged and overturned. They undermine a progressive and far-sighted, environmentally conscious law that has worked well for nearly half a century.



OTHER VIEWS

Anti-Semitism rising on the left

OSWIECIM, POLAND

Recently, the State Department revised its definition of anti-Semitism to include "drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis"—an apparent response to the rise of the anti-Israel BDS (Boycott, Divest and Sanctions) movement whose supporters routinely make such comparisons. That is a good thing.

Just a few days ago, I sat in the former SS headquarters of the Auschwitz concentration camp with Piotr Cywinski, director of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum. Speaking beside a window overlooking the gas chamber and crematorium where countless souls perished, he explained that there is no difference between hatred of Israel and hatred for Jews.

"It's the same old story with some different words," he said. "If you are speaking with somebody who is defending some anti-Israeli ideologies, maybe not in the first minute, maybe not in the second minute, but in the third minute you will find that the same old story accusing Jews of every bad thing in the world. For me, that's very, very clear. I never saw any anti-Israeli theory that was not anti-Semitic."

In an interview, my American Enterprise Institute colleague Danielle Pletka and I asked Cywinski about politicians such as Reps. Ilhan Omar, D-Minn., and Rashida Tlaib, D-Mich., who recently said that boycotting Israel is no different from boycotting Nazi Germany.

"I can't see why people feel free to compare Israel to the Nazis," Cywinski said. "I don't want to comment on it on an intellectual level. It's simply an insult. It's an insult to the victims and an insult to the survivors and an insult to a whole country, to a whole society." There was a time, he said, when "if somebody would [say] something like this, it would be the end of his political career. Now it's a question of two days maybe of troubles. And this is something terrible, because that means that there's no more responsibility with words."

As for the BDS movement, he said, "I don't know why some politicians have a deep need to focus so permanently on this only one country. If you look to the United Nations, how many resolutions

were concerning Israel and how many were concerning, let's say, Sudan?"

The problem of anti-Semitism is rising across the world. A recent CNN poll found that more than a quarter of Europeans say Jews have too much influence in business and finance, while 1 in 5 said Jews have too much influence in the media and politics. Anti-Semitic incidents are on the rise as well. Here in the United States, we saw neo-Nazis marching in Charlottesville chanting "Jews will not replace us!" and horrific shootings at synagogues near San Diego in April and in Pittsburgh last year. In 2018, France reported a 74% increase in anti-Semitic attacks, while in Germany they grew by 60%.

While the rise of far-right populism has played a role, many victims say those on the right account for only a fraction of these anti-Semitic incidents. In December, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights asked European Jews who was responsible for the most serious incident of anti-Semitic harassment they had experienced: Only 13% said it was someone with a far-right political view, while 30% said it was an "extremist Muslim" and 20% said it was someone with left-wing views.

The fact is anti-Semitism is a growing problem on the left. In Britain earlier this year, three members of the Labour Party resigned after accusing the party and its leader, Jeremy Corbyn, of being—as a former Labour general secretary put it—"institutionally anti-Semitic." In Washington, congressional Democrats have struggled to confront anti-Semitism within their own ranks. Cywinski says the rise of left-wing anti-Semitism is not surprising. "Do not forget that the Nazi party in Germany was a party of workers," he says. "We are many times thinking about the Nazis as far right. They were also very deeply speaking ... to the left, using some leftist language."

Whether on the left or the right, we all have an obligation to confront anti-Semitism and other forms of racism and xenophobia. Asked if politicians who express anti-Semitic attitudes should come here, Cywinski says everyone should come. "People need to see Auschwitz. People need to come not only to cry over all of the victims ... but maybe to feel their own responsibility today."

Marc A. Thiessen writes for *The Washington Post*. Reach him on Twitter, @marcthiessen.



MARC THIESSEN

STATE VIEWS

Congress has chance to cut drug prices

For decades, Big Pharma has raised drug prices with impunity. Here in Wisconsin, the average annual cost of brand name prescription drug treatment increased 58% between 2012 and 2017, while the annual income for Wisconsin residents increased only 12.9 percent. Prescription drugs don't work if patients can't afford them.

That's why the Senate needs to pass the Prescription Drug Pricing Reduction Act when they return from August recess. It's time. We urge Sens. Ron Johnson and Tammy Baldwin to back this legislation, which passed the Senate Finance Committee in July with strong bipartisan support.

For too long, drug companies have been price gouging seniors and hardworking Americans. Consider insulin, which people with diabetes rely on. Its price nearly tripled from 2002 to 2013.

Older Americans are hit especially hard. Medicare Part D enrollees take an average of four to five prescriptions per month, and their average annual income is around \$26,000. One in three Americans has not taken a medication as prescribed because of the cost.

The root cause of the problem is clear: the high prices of prescription drugs set by pharmaceutical companies when they first come on the market, which then rise faster than inflation.

In March, AARP launched a nationwide campaign called Stop Rx Greed to rein in drug prices for all Americans. The bill under consideration in the Senate would cap out-of-pocket drug costs for seniors and crack down on drug makers whose price hikes outpace inflation.

The nation clearly needs this reform: the average drug price increase in the first six months of 2019 was 10.5 percent—five times the rate of inflation. Wisconsin residents like all Americans already pay among the highest drug prices in the world. Meanwhile, Big Pharma is fighting for the status quo—and blocking improvements to the system that could bring relief to seniors, families and small businesses.

In Washington, D.C., there is rare bipartisan agreement that something must be done. President Trump addressed the issue in his State of the Union, saying: "It is unacceptable that Americans pay vastly more than people in other countries for the exact same drugs, often made in the exact same place. This is wrong, unfair, and together we can stop it."

Wisconsin's congressional delegation is in the position to lead on this issue and make a difference. We urge the Senate to pass the Prescription Drug Pricing Reduction Act in the fall, when the House is expected to act on its own drug pricing bill.

While there is reason to be hopeful that drug prices will come down, hope is not enough. Too much is at stake. No Wisconsinite should be forced to choose between putting food on the table or buying a lifesaving medication. Congress needs to act to stop Rx greed. This legislation should be at the top of the agenda when the Senate returns to Washington.

Sam Wilson is state director of AARP Wisconsin.



SAM WILSON

Sick and tired of reading Marc Thiessen's columns

Enough of the opinion columns from Marc Thiessen. His American Enterprise Institute biography states Thiessen "writes about presidential leadership." Nothing could be further from the truth.

Donald Trump is undoubtedly the worst president ever. Trump is a habitual liar, a narcissist and a white supremacist. He appoints unqualified people to important governmental positions. He's an undicted co-conspirator ("Individual 1") and is totally clueless about the responsibilities of being president for ALL of our citizens.

Regardless of what outrageous actions Trump does, Thiessen consistently overlooks Trump's actions. Thiessen does not write about the subservience to Trump of the morally challenged GOP elected people in D.C. and instead focuses on his perceived shortcomings of the Democrats. Really?

"Rome is burning" and has been since Trump took office, and Thiessen is totally oblivious to it. Under Trump, the deficit is on a path to more than a \$1 trillion per year, and discretionary government spending is growing faster than it ever was under Barack Obama (when he was working to stimulate our way out of the Great Recession).

What Thiessen has previously portrayed as generational theft and galloping socialism under Obama is now accepted with zero Thiessen/GOP outrage under Trump. Thiessen/GOP only cares about deficits when a Democrat is the president.

Thiessen should be speaking out against tariffs. Silence! Our trade deficits are increasing dramatically. Silence! Election security. Silence!

Give your readers a break by removing Thiessen and substitute a writer who has some objectivity regarding what is important in national politics and governing regardless of ideology.

ROBERT OBLAK
Walworth

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Sid Schwartz, Editor
sschwartz@gazettextra.com

Ann Fiore, Chief Copy Editor
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