

Cato Policy Report

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IS THIS HOW IT WORKS IN THE CIVICS BOOKS?

Nearly 2,000 companies and organizations have lobbied Congress and the administration this year in an attempt to influence the contours of major new infrastructure spending, an effort that is sure to intensify now that the Senate is hoping to vote within days on their version of the \$1 trillion public-works package. . . .

Those groups collectively have spent more than \$426 million in their lobbying efforts, which includes trying to sway lawmakers and regulators on far more than just infrastructure, the center's data show. The activity reflects a dramatic uptick from the same period one year ago, when more than 1,300 lobbying operations sought to target Washington on infrastructure. . . .

This year alone, more than 260 companies and other entities large and small have hired new lobbying firms in Washington specifically on infrastructure.

— *Washington Post*, August 4, 2021

IMAGINE HOW BAD THE OTHER CHOICES WERE

The appointment of [Pedro] Francke, whose politics are similar to those of Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), [as economy minister] was considered essential to stop Peruvian markets from going into free fall.

— *Washington Post*, August 11, 2021

TAX HIKES NOT RAPACIOUS ENOUGH FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

House Democrats on Monday presented a plan to pay for their expansive social policy and climate change package by raising taxes by more than \$2 trillion, largely on wealthy individuals and profitable corporations.

But the proposal, while substantial in

scope, stopped well short of changes needed to dent the vast fortunes of tycoons like Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk. . . .

They focused on traditional ways of raising revenue: by raising tax rates on income rather than targeting wealth itself. . . .

In other areas, the committee appears to be making only glancing blows at the wealthiest Americans.

— *New York Times*, September 13, 2021

WE MEANT WE WON'T TAX THE THINGS WE LIKE

The Biden administration, which has pledged not to increase taxes on households making under \$400,000, has said that that promise applies to direct tax increases, not to corporate taxes. They have used the pledge to reject gas-tax increases, but view tobacco use as not a required cost for people to provide for their families, and thus say that those taxes aren't subject to the pledge.

— *Wall Street Journal*, September 14, 2021

NOT THE ONES WHO HAVE TO PAY FOR IT

A universal basic income would give everyone more money.

— *Ezra Klein, New York Times*, September 19, 2021

MORE HOUSING WITHOUT BUILDING HOUSES

[Maryland gubernatorial candidate Douglas] Gansler advocated for renovating existing buildings into affordable housing rather than building entirely new units, citing concerns about urban sprawl.

“I don't think the answer is to build more houses,” Gansler said. “There's plenty of houses out there.”

— *Talbot Spy*, September 22, 2021

NO DOUBT

Chip manufacturers . . . are also impatient for Congress to approve \$52 billion in federal subsidies to boost domestic semiconductor manufacturing.

— *Washington Post*, September 24, 2021

ONLY 58 MINUTES LONGER THAN BY CAR

Virginia is expanding Amtrak service in downtown Richmond this week that links to the nation's capital. . . .

The trip to Washington takes 2 hours and 47 minutes.

— *Washington Post*, September 27, 2021

SWEDISH ECONOMIST ASSAR LINDBECK, 1972: “RENT CONTROL APPEARS TO BE THE MOST EFFICIENT TECHNIQUE PRESENTLY KNOWN TO DESTROY A CITY—EXCEPT FOR BOMBING.”

A shortage of accommodation in Stockholm and other cities, is causing a major headache for young Swedes—in a country which has been championing rent controls since World War Two.

Rents are supposed to be kept low due to nationwide rules, and collective bargaining between state-approved tenant and landlord associations.

In theory, anyone can join a city's state-run queue for what Swedes call a “first-hand” accommodation contract.

Once you have one of these highly-prized contracts it's yours for life. But in Stockholm, the average waiting time for a rent-controlled property is now nine years, says the city's housing agency Bostadsförmedlingen, up from around five years a decade ago.

— *BBC*, August 26, 2021