

Cato Policy Report

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“To Be Governed...”

FAT LEONARD UNDERSTANDS PUBLIC CHOICE

The “Fat Leonard” scandal—known by the 350-pound Mr. Francis’s nickname—would lead to the investigation of hundreds of Navy personnel and the indictment of dozens on charges related to corruption. . . .

By the late 2000s he had a near monopoly on supplying the Navy in the Pacific.

He also became a pimp for Navy officers. In return, they overlooked inflated bills and helped him win multimillion-dollar contracts. . . .

He had also made himself rich. He rented a mansion in Singapore valued at \$130 million and owned a fleet of 20 luxury cars, paid for almost entirely by the U.S. taxpayer, he said. “I mean, if you’ve got a defense contract, you’re good for life,” Mr. Francis explained, because the military “doesn’t do due diligence, because it’s not their money. It’s Uncle Sam’s money.”

—*Wall Street Journal*, September 30, 2021

SO . . . NOT EXACTLY UNIFYING?

Russian President Vladimir Putin again attacked Western liberalism in a fiery address on Thursday, blasting so-called cancel culture and advances in gay and transgender rights. . . .

Putin is trying to show that he “stands for values that will not divide society and throw it into chaos,” said Matthew Sussex, a Russia expert at the Australian National University. “On the one hand, it’s a unifying message. But on the other hand, it does hit . . . the transgender and gay communities that the Russian government has continued to target.”

—*Washington Post*, October 22, 2021

EVERY LITTLE LINE HAS A LOBBYIST ALL ITS OWN

It includes a \$4.1 billion tax break for people who buy electric bicycles, \$2.5 billion for “tree equity,” another \$2.5 billion to help “contingency fee” lawyers recoup their expenses and a long-sought tax break for producers of sound recordings.

The marquee programs within the Democrats’ social safety net and climate change bill—such as universal prekindergarten, child care subsidies and prescription drug price controls—have garnered most of the public attention. But when a nearly \$2 trillion piece of legislation moves through Congress, it affords lawmakers ample opportunity to pursue any number of niche issues—and lobbyists and industries plenty of room to notch long-sought victories tucked deep inside thousands of pages of text. . . .

Many obscure provisions may emerge as subjects of ridicule, but Democrats are not shying away from their work. Every niche item has a constituency that regards it as central.

—*New York Times*, November 17, 2021

WASHINGTON KABUKI

President Biden called on the Federal Trade Commission to investigate whether oil-and-gas companies are participating in illegal conduct aimed at keeping gasoline prices high, in the latest effort by the White House to respond to public concerns about costs for everything from fuel to groceries.

Outside analysts expressed skepticism that the FTC would find enough evidence to substantiate Mr. Biden’s allegations. . . .

Facing political fallout from high gas

prices, past presidents of both parties have called for similar investigations into alleged price gouging and manipulation in the market. The efforts rarely result in federal action.

—*Wall Street Journal*, November 17, 2021

THAT’LL USUALLY DO IT

Enviva and other companies are cutting trees, turning them into wood pellets and shipping them to power plants in Europe. . . . The industry is growing quickly because of government subsidies on both sides of the Atlantic.

—*NPR*, November 10, 2021

TECHNICALLY, 52 SENATORS OPPOSE THE BILL

2 senators cannot be allowed to defeat what 48 senators and 210 House members want.

—*Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) on Twitter*, October 1, 2021

SO MUCH FOR THAT

An Abbott spokesperson, Renae Eze, confirmed private businesses still have the option of mandating vaccines for their workers, saying, “Private businesses don’t need government running their business.”

—*Texas Tribune*, August 25, 2021

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott on Monday issued another executive order cracking down on COVID-19 vaccine mandates—this time banning any entity in Texas, including private businesses, from requiring vaccinations for employees or customers.

—*Texas Tribune*, October 11, 2021