

DEPT. OF TIME TICKING -- "Trump's window for scoring early legislative victories is shrinking," by WaPo's Damian Paletta and Mike Debonis: "President Trump faces an increasingly narrow path to win major legislative victories before the looming August recess, with only two months left to revive his health-care or tax initiatives before Congress departs for a long break. White House officials said Tuesday that Trump has become increasingly incensed that legislation is bogging down in the Senate, something they blame on Democrats. ...

"White House officials plan to push Senate Republicans in June to vote on a repeal of the Affordable Care Act, and they want to spend the rest of the summer whipping up support for major tax cuts. They are also planning to push lawmakers soon to consider an infrastructure package, although that effort has also moved more slowly because his staff hasn't put together a final plan." <http://wapo.st/2slrpip>

-- BACK IN REALITY ... -- Can the Senate cobble together a health-care plan in June? Sure anything can happen. Is it likely? No. They have hardly started putting together their own version of a health-care overhaul, and last week, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said, "I don't know how we get to 50 (votes) at the moment. But that's the goal." That means they are nowhere close, at the moment. Keep in mind the next time you hear the White House predict something: they've been saying for months that they are on the brink of releasing an infrastructure package. After the August recess it only gets tougher. Congress will have to fund government, lift the debt ceiling and then it's campaign season.

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FOR YOUR RADAR -- "Bombing in diplomatic area of Kabul kills 80, wounds scores," by AP's Rahim Faiez and Amir Shah in Kabul: "A massive explosion rocked a highly secure diplomatic area of Kabul on Wednesday morning, killing 80 people and wounding as many as 350, an attack that left a scene of mayhem and destruction and sent a huge plume of smoke over the Afghan capital. The target of the attack -- which officials said was a suicide car bombing -- was not immediately known, but Ismail Kawasi, spokesman of the public health ministry, said most of the casualties were civilians, including women and children. It was one of the worst attacks Kabul has seen since the drawdown of foreign forces at the end of 2014.

"Associated Press images from the scene showed the German Embassy and

several other embassies located in the area heavily damaged in the explosion. It wasn't known if any foreign diplomats were among the casualties but Germany and Pakistan said some of their embassy employees and staff were hurt in the explosion."

<http://apne.ws/2qzy9Nf>

JARED'S MOOD from **ANNIE KARNI**, the master of Jared intrigue -- "**Kushner tries to pretend everything's normal**": "There has been no rallying the troops in the White House, and no open acknowledgement from President Donald Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, that he has transformed from behind-the-scenes West Wing powerbroker to its lead distracting story. Kushner led three meetings in the West Wing on Tuesday -- and never once acknowledged the stories about him that dominated cable news since last week, when it was reported that during the campaign he discussed setting up a secret communications backchannel to Moscow."

<http://politi.co/2qyFBbB>

MATT NUSSBAUM, TARA PALMERI and **JOSH DAWSEY** -- "**Spicer's 'middle finger' to the press**": "On the recent trip abroad, he repeatedly showed the strain of the job. At one point, he got drinks with a group of other staffers and reporters in Jerusalem, where he was adamant that the conversation steer clear of work. 'The most we've seen of Sean [Spicer] was at a rooftop bar in Jerusalem,' said one U.S. journalist on the trip. 'But he refused to take work-related questions and said if you asked him a work-related question, then you had to take a shot.' The comment was made in jest, according to people present, and no shots were taken." <http://politi.co/2rTM14V>

INSIDE STATE -- "**Tillerson's Enigmatic Chief of Staff Wields Power, Not Spotlight**," by Bloomberg's Nick Wadhams: "One unfamiliar name stood out among the coterie of family and aides President Donald Trump brought into his meeting with Pope Francis at the Vatican last week: Margaret Peterlin. The presence of Peterlin -- Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's chief of staff -- underscored the former congressional staffer and Mars Inc. lawyer's growing clout in the administration. Not even Press Secretary Sean Spicer, a practicing Catholic who interacts with Trump almost daily, made it to the Papal audience, which included Tillerson as well as Melania and Ivanka Trump.

"**Peterlin, a Navy veteran** who as a congressional aide helped draft the Patriot Act after the Sept. 11 attacks, gained Tillerson's trust by navigating him through his Senate confirmation hearings in January. With most top State Department jobs unfilled, Peterlin has more power than any chief of staff in recent memory, bringing in key