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**From:** Anna Palmer Jake Sherman Daniel Lippman  
**Sent:** Fri 12/1/2017 11:28:43 AM  
**Subject:** POLITICO Playbook, presented by PhRMA: TAX DEBATE scheduled to resume at 11 a.m. -- TRUMP says shutdown could be good for him -- KNOWING JOHN MCENTEE -- GOV'T SHUTDOWN is one week away -- TRUMP pressed Senate to end Russia probe -- B'DAY: Karen Tumulty

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Today's POLITICO Playbook presented by PhRMA

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## Driving the Day

**Good Friday morning and welcome to December. THE SENATE IS SCHEDULED TO RESUME WORK ON THE TAX BILL** this morning. Late yesterday, the process hit a snag.

**SEUNG MIN KIM** and **COLIN WILHELM**: "Multiple GOP senators leaving the chamber after a dramatic late afternoon vote said a key proposal for deficit hawks -- a trigger to raise tax rates if sufficient economic growth did not materialize -- would not pass procedural muster and would need to find something else to satisfy the bloc of deficit hawk holdouts, led by Sen. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.).

**"It doesn't look like the trigger is going to work,** according to the parliamentarian,' Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn (R-Texas) said. 'So we have an alternative, frankly: a tax increase we don't want to do to try to address Sen. Corker's concerns.'" <http://politi.co/2iqAOpU>

-- **WAPO'S ERICA WERNER, MIKE DEBONIS** and **DAMIAN PALETTA**: "Now, Republican leaders may have to brace for an intraparty battle over how far to go to accommodate deficit concerns. Other Republicans are arguing strongly against reducing the size of the bill's tax cut, as may now be necessary to satisfy the deficit hawks. ...

**"Thursday evening, senators were eyeing a wide range of options** to move legislation forward. They are discussing adding higher taxes on upper-income Americans and modestly rolling back the bill's large corporate tax cut. But they did not have an obvious solution, given the need to add hundreds of billions of revenue back into the bill. ...

**"The debate is now expected to spill into Friday night. Corker and Flake** are both retiring from the Senate and are not up for reelection, giving Republican leaders little leverage over them. And Johnson has pushed his challenge of GOP leaders, some of whom he believes abandoned him during his reelection effort last year."

<http://wapo.st/2AKXE2N>

-- **WSJ'S RICH RUBIN, SIOBHAN HUGHES** and **KRISTINA PETERSON**: "One possible outcome is that the corporate tax rate would start at 20% and rise in stair-step increments in later years. That move could shrink the size of the tax cut by at least \$350 billion over a decade, making it about three-quarters of its previous size and potentially dampening some of the economic growth Republicans said they are trying to create.

**"White House congressional liaison Marc Short**, who was dashing between Republican leadership offices, said that Republicans were still on track and the legislation's goals would remain the same. Referring to the possible change on corporate taxes, Mr. Short said, 'Even if that happens, it provides record tax relief for the corporate side, and middle-income families.'" <http://on.wsj.com/2Aii3v4>

**ALL EYES** will be on Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell who still must convince the skeptical deficit hawks to vote for the bill. **WHO TO WATCH -- THE USUAL SUSPECTS:** Sens. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.), Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.) and Ron Johnson (R-Wis.).

**UNDER THE RADAR -- "Tax bill could trigger historic spending cuts,"** by Adam Cancryn and Sarah Ferris: "Republicans are on the verge of a massive tax overhaul that would hand President Donald Trump his first major legislative victory. But the \$1.5 trillion tax package could trigger eye-popping cuts to a slew of federal programs, including Medicare. Unless Congress acts swiftly to stop it, as much as \$150 billion per year would be cut from initiatives ranging from farm subsidies to student loans to support services for crime victims. Medicare alone could see cuts of \$25 billion a year. And the specter of those cuts has thrust Congress into a high-stakes game of political chicken.

**"With so much attention focused on the tax bill** itself neither lawmakers nor many of the advocacy groups had paid as much attention to the depth and breadth of the cuts that will ensue unless the House and Senate come up with a bipartisan deal to stop them. Some groups had run Medicare ads, but they were largely overshadowed by the tax debate itself." <http://politi.co/2BvVzVz>

**A REMINDER** of what's on Washington's radar this month: renewing a massive children's health program, government funding, a rewrite of the country's tax code, restoring subsidies for the health care law, working on a fix so hundreds of thousands of undocumented people do not get deported and a deal to lift spending caps.

**ONE WEEK** until the government runs out of money.

**SHUTDOWN WATCH -- "Trump tells confidants that a government shutdown might be good for him,"** by WaPo's Josh Dawsey, Sean Sullivan and Ed O'Keefe: "President Trump has told confidants that a government shutdown could be good for him politically and is focusing on his hard-line immigration stance as a way to win back supporters unhappy with his outreach to Democrats this fall, according to people who have spoken with him recently. Over the past 10 days, the president has also told advisers that it is important that he is seen as tough on immigration and getting money for a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border, according to two people who have spoken with him. He has asked friends about how a shutdown would affect him politically and has told several people he would put the blame on Democrats." <http://wapo.st/2j4xsFY>

-- **YOU WON'T FIND** many Republicans on Capitol Hill who think that a shutdown is good for them.

**THE NEW BOSS AT LANGLEY? -- "Cotton cements his rise under Trump:** The Arkansas senator, under consideration as a potential successor to Mike Pompeo as CIA director, has chosen to shape the president rather than railing against him," by Eliana Johnson and Ali Watkins: "Cotton's appointment would cement his meteoric rise in Republican politics, the result of qualities that have taken him, in a matter of years, from freshman congressman to the youngest serving U.S. senator to, potentially, the youngest CIA director in American history: loyalty, brains and raw ambition.

**"He also embodies one of the GOP's responses to Trump.** Having already shared some of the president's populist leanings, he has worked to co-opt and shape the president rather than rail against him. An ideological conservative from the American heartland, Cotton came up through the Ivy League and was groomed by some of the country's leading conservative thinkers, from the Weekly Standard's Bill Kristol, one of Trump's leading critics, to the acolytes of Leo Strauss at the Claremont Institute who have been far more supportive of the president." <http://politi.co/2zUjn8F>

-- **"White House wanted to publicly shame Tillerson, source says,"** by CNN's Michelle Kosinski and Sara Murray: "Reports that the White House has a tentative plan to replace Secretary of State Rex Tillerson that emerged Thursday were an effort to express President Donald Trump's deep displeasure and publicly shame his secretary of state, a source with direct knowledge of the White House's thinking said Thursday. The hope from the White House, the source said, is to push out the plan to replace Tillerson and then 'wait for him to punch out.'" <http://cnn.it/2AK0WDn>

-- **"We'll take Pompeo over Tillerson, frustrated diplomats say:** Even skeptics of the hawkish CIA director say they would welcome a change - and a solid Trump ally - at the helm of their beleaguered department," by Nahal Toosi: <http://politi.co/2jzwlYM>

-- **NYT'S MARK LANDLER: "Replacing Tillerson With Pompeo Would Supplant a Moderate With a Hawk":** "For all his political and bureaucratic stumbles, Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson has been a steady voice of moderation in how the Trump

administration engages with the world.

**"That voice will be lost if, as expected,** President Trump replaces Mr. Tillerson at the State Department with Mike Pompeo, a hard-line former Republican congressman who has brought an avowedly political edge to the Central Intelligence Agency, where he is the director. Mr. Pompeo, a West Point graduate best known for savaging Hillary Clinton's response to the deadly attack in Benghazi, Libya, when she was secretary of state, has called for the Iran nuclear agreement to be ripped up, played down talk of Russia's interference in the 2016 election and suggested that regime change in North Korea would be a welcome development.

**"Those views have put him in good stead with Mr. Trump,** whom White House aides said has come to value Mr. Pompeo's pungent opinions and hard-charging style during his presidential daily briefings. Mr. Trump, by contrast, has publicly undermined Mr. Tillerson while the secretary of state has responded with thinly veiled contempt."

<http://nyti.ms/2jzZatP>

**\*\*\*\*\* A message from PhRMA: How much are hospitals marking up medicine prices?** According to new Moran Company analysis, hospitals mark up medicine prices nearly 500 percent. The analysis of 20 medicines also found a hospital is paid 2.5 times what the biopharmaceutical company, who brought the medicine to market, receives. Read more: <http://onphr.ma/2hSaqox> \*\*\*\*\*

**TRUMP'S FRIDAY** -- Trump is meeting with Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj of Libya. He will have lunch with Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Defense Secretary James Mattis. This afternoon, he will give a speech at a White House Christmas reception.

**SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE -- "Kate Steinle trial: Garcia Zarate acquitted in San Francisco pier killing,"** by Vivian Ho: "A jury handed a stunning acquittal on murder and manslaughter charges to a homeless undocumented immigrant whose arrest in the killing of Kate Steinle on a San Francisco Bay pier intensified a national debate over sanctuary laws. ... [T]he Superior Court jury ... [found] credence in defense attorneys' argument that the shot that ricocheted off the concrete ground before piercing Steinle's heart was an accident, with the gun discharging after the defendant stumbled upon it on the waterfront on July 1, 2015.

**"Garcia Zarate, a 45-year-old Mexican citizen** who was released from County Jail before the killing despite a federal request that he be held for his sixth deportation, was convicted of a single lesser charge of being a felon in possession of a gun. He faces a sentence of 16 months, two years or three years in state prison. ... U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions blamed the killing on San Francisco's policy of refusing cooperation with immigration agents. Jim Steinle, who had been strolling on the pier with his daughter when she fell, told The Chronicle he was 'saddened and shocked,' adding, 'Justice was rendered, but it was not served.'" <http://bit.ly/2BATsQt>

--@realDonaldTrump at 10:30 p.m.: "A disgraceful verdict in the Kate Steinle case! No

wonder the people of our Country are so angry with Illegal Immigration." ... **at 6:03 a.m.:** "The Kate Steinle killer came back and back over the weakly protected Obama border, always committing crimes and being violent, and yet this info was not used in court. His exoneration is a complete travesty of justice. BUILD THE WALL!" ... **at 6:13 a.m.:** "The jury was not told the killer of Kate was a 7 time felon. The Schumer/Pelosi Democrats are so weak on Crime that they will pay a big price in the 2018 and 2020 Elections."

**THE RUSSIA REPORT -- "Trump Pressed Top Republicans to End Senate Russia Inquiry,"** by NYT's Jonathan Martin, Maggie Haberman and Alex Burns: "President Trump over the summer repeatedly urged senior Senate Republicans, including the chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, to end the panel's investigation into Russia's interference in the 2016 election, according to a half dozen lawmakers and aides. Mr. Trump's requests were a highly unusual intervention from a president into a legislative inquiry involving his family and close aides.

**"Senator Richard Burr of North Carolina,** the intelligence committee chairman, said in an interview this week that Mr. Trump told him that he was eager to see an investigation that has overshadowed much of the first year of his presidency come to an end.

**"It was something along the lines of,** 'I hope you can conclude this as quickly as possible,' Mr. Burr said. He said he replied to Mr. Trump that 'when we have exhausted everybody we need to talk to, we will finish.' In addition, according to lawmakers and aides, Mr. Trump told Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the Republican leader, and Senator Roy Blunt, Republican of Missouri and a member of the intelligence committee, to end the investigation swiftly." <http://nyti.ms/2jz8vSF>

**-- "Manafort strikes \$11 million bail deal with prosecutors,"** by Josh Gerstein and Darren Samuelsohn: "Former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort has reached an \$11 million bail agreement with prosecutors that could clear the way for him to be released from the house arrest he's been under for the past four weeks. In court filings released Thursday afternoon, Manafort's defense attorneys revealed 'an agreed-upon bail package' with lawyers from special counsel Robert Mueller's office, which obtained an indictment last month charging Manafort and business partner Rick Gates with money laundering and failing to register as foreign agents." <http://politi.co/2zTwwik>

**-- "Russian trolls pushed graphic, racist tweets to American voters,"** by NBC News' Ben Popken: "A zealous band of Russian trolls flooded Twitter with hundreds of thousands of divisive posts in 2016 - accusing Democrats of satanic practices and supporting rape - in an attempt to influence the presidential election, according to a new analysis of a Twitter database by NBC News. The effort tricked thousands of users into spreading graphic racial epithets across social media, interweaving provocative content with disinformation and falsehoods. The tweets were uncovered in a database of over 202,000 deleted Russian troll tweets that NBC News compiled." <http://nbcnews.to/2AIUakw>

**-- "Erik Prince details Seychelles meeting with Russian banker,"** by CNN's Manu

Raju, Jeremy Herb and Marshall Cohen: "Blackwater founder Erik Prince testified to House lawmakers that he met the head of a Russian investment fund earlier this year -- but he insisted it was not part of an effort to set up a Russian backchannel with the Trump administration, multiple sources told CNN. In private testimony Thursday, Prince informed the House Intelligence Committee that he met in the Seychelles with Kirill Dmitriev, who is the chief executive of the state-run Russian Direct Investment Fund, at the request of the United Arab Emirates to discuss business opportunities.

**"The meeting on the island in the Indian Ocean**, he said, lasted roughly 20 minutes after dinner over a beer. Prince insisted he did not have the meeting at the request of the Trump administration, according to multiple sources with direct knowledge of the situation. ... But Prince downplayed his ties to the Trump's team, merely saying he was a Trump donor and had met the President on only one occasion, the sources said." <http://cnn.it/2ApsLxV>

-- **"Trump Associate Felix Sater Selling His \$2.5M Long Island Manse,"** by Realtor.com's Becky Bracken: "Called one of the 'most colorful characters' in the ongoing Justice Department investigation into ties between President Donald Trump and Russia, real estate developer Felix Sater is now selling his home in Sands Point, NY, for just under \$2.5 million. The four-bedroom, 3.5-bath, 3,600-square-foot home is surrounded by lush foliage, and walls of arborvitae offer privacy for lounging by the pool. It's a pristine Long Island property on nearly 2 acres that any family would love to call home." **With four pics** <http://bit.ly/2AoLZDX>

**SCOOP -- "The Trump Administration Is Mulling A Pitch For A Private 'Rendition' And Spy Network,"** by BuzzFeed's Aram Roston: "The White House and CIA have been considering a package of secret proposals to allow former U.S. intelligence officers to run privatized covert actions, intelligence gathering, and propaganda missions, according to three sources who've been briefed on or have direct knowledge of the proposals. One of the proposals would involve hiring a private company, Amyntor Group, for millions of dollars to set up a large intelligence network and run counterterrorist propaganda efforts, according to the sources.

**"Amyntor's officials and employees include veterans** of a variety of U.S. covert operations, ranging from the Reagan-era Iran-Contra affair to more recent actions in Iraq and Afghanistan. ... Another proposal presented to U.S. officials would allow individuals affiliated with the company to help capture wanted terrorists on behalf of the United States. In keeping with that proposal, people close to the company are tracking two specific suspects in a Middle Eastern country, the sources said, for possible 'rendition' to the United States." <http://bzfd.it/2nkUfBR>

**WHAT RON DERMER IS READING -- "Trump inches toward moving U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem:** The president promised during the campaign to support the move from Tel Aviv, but delayed it in June amid efforts to revive the Middle East peace process," by Andrew Restuccia and Eliana Johnson: "President Donald Trump and his senior aides are mulling a plan to eventually move the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to

Jerusalem, a decision that could derail Trump's attempts to restart peace talks between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

**"A leading option under consideration:** temporarily keeping the U.S. embassy in Tel Aviv while also outlining a longer-term strategy to begin the process of moving the embassy to Jerusalem, according to two administration officials. The plan is meant to strike a middle ground on the politically treacherous issue. One of the officials also said the administration is weighing whether to officially recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel." <http://politi.co/2zSjVeY>

**FIRST IN PLAYBOOK - WHAT JARED SAID LAST NIGHT -- JARED KUSHNER** spoke at a dinner hosted by Egyptian Ambassador Yasser Reda and Nahla Reda in the Kennedy Caucus Room in the Senate to commemorate the 40th anniversary of former Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's visit to Jerusalem. "Forty years ago, President Anwar Sadat stood before the Knesset in Jerusalem, where his very presence, less than five years after the 1973 War, was something of a miracle. ... President Sadat demonstrated the courage that all great leaders need and too few possess. He took a risk for peace and earned a Nobel Prize for taking that risk. He also paid for that risk with his life. But the peace endures today, and the region is more stable and the opportunities for progress more plentiful as a result. Anwar Sadat understood that a country needed more than military strength to be great.

**"His decision to chart Egypt on a course of peace and co-existence** was an act of moral courage. ... President Sadat's dream -- a peaceful, thriving Egypt -- is a model for the world, but we should be under no illusions about the task facing us all as we continue to make that dream of peace and prosperity a reality. ... It is an honor to be here tonight, with the Former First Lady Jehan Sadat and Ambassador Yasser Reda as we stand together with America's close friend and partner in fighting terror. It is also great to have Israeli Ambassador Ron Dermer here this evening ... Tonight we remember a great man. His mission endures."

**SPOTTED:** Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin, Sen. Ed Markey (D-Mass.), former Sen. Norm Coleman (R-Minn.), Reps. Mark Meadows (R-N.C.), Doug Lamborn (R-Colo.), Ed Royce (R-Calif.), and Darrell Issa (R-Calif.), Sergio Gor, Andy Westberry, Ezra Friedlander, Jacob Olidort.

**COMING ATTRACTIONS -- "House GOP leaders preparing to bring gun measures to the floor,"** by Kyle Cheney and John Bresnahan: "House Republican leaders are preparing to move ahead with a package of gun legislation that would sharply expand concealed-carry rights but also address policies that came into play during two recent mass shootings. The proposal is expected to come to the floor as soon as next week. GOP leaders conducted a full whip count of the plan Thursday and sensed enough support from colleagues to bring up the measure, a combination of three proposals that would include a major policy win for gun rights advocates but also seek to placate those clamoring for policy changes following two of the worst shooting massacres in American history -- in Las Vegas and Sutherland Springs, Texas." <http://politi.co/2kbVVwt>

**PIC DU JOUR -- @SteveRudinABC7:** "The National Tree Lighting ceremony was beautiful this evening - but hard not to notice the empty seats. #Christmas #DMV #USA"  
<http://bit.ly/2kdXIkI>

**YOU'RE INVITED --** Our first live podcast taping next Thursday night (Dec. 7) at 7 p.m. at Sixth and I. Our inaugural guests: **MICHAEL BARBARO**, host of the New York Times' hit podcast "The Daily," **DCCC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DAN SENA** and **NRCC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR JOHN ROGERS**. And a panel of **POLITICO** stars: **RACHAEL BADE**, **SEUNG MIN KIM** and **ANNIE KARNI**. Get your tickets now!  
<http://bit.ly/2hWK7tF>

## Playbook Reads

**PHOTO DU JOUR:** The National Christmas Tree is lit at the White House Ellipse on Nov. 30. | Astrid Riecken/Getty Images

**JOHN MCENTEE PROFILE -- "The Trick-Shot QB Who Played His Way Into Trump's Inner Circle,"** by Nancy Cook and Ben Strauss: "At age 27, John McEntee, a former University of Connecticut quarterback and star of a viral YouTube trick-throw video, former low-level Fox News staffer and campaign official, now makes \$115,000 a year as Trump's personal aide and body man. How he rose to this level of prominence is in some respects the quintessential tale of success within Trump's organization, where loyalty and looks often matter more than résumé. Athletically handsome and a sharp dresser-one former campaign official called him 'so pretty'-McEntee arrived at Trump's doorstep in August 2015 with no more qualifications than his determination to make the boss happy.

"[H]e has a conspicuously low profile -- McEntee's a 'lock box,' in the words of his father and one White House aide, who won't even dish to his own family. 'He literally loves the president. Not even to me, he would never say anything negative, not in a million years,' his father, John, says. 'He loves the president and that family. Jared and Ivanka, too.'" <http://politi.co/2noAsBR>

**ALABAMA LATEST -- "Bannon-backed group makes six-figure ad buy in last-minute push for Moore,"** by CNN's Kaitlan Collins: "With less than two weeks to go in a volatile special election that has been rocked by allegations of sexual assault against the Republican front-runner, the group, Great America Alliance, is purchasing \$150,000 worth of television, radio and digital ads to hit Moore's Democratic opponent, Doug Jones, for his positions on issues like abortion. ... One of the commercials that Great America Alliance will run, which the group initially released online, calls Jones' views on abortion 'deceptive and dangerous.'" <http://cnn.it/2jzN1F6> ... **The ad**  
<http://bit.ly/2BCoxDw>

**SEXUAL HARASSMENT FILES -- "Conyers vs. Franken: Black lawmakers suggest double standard,"** by Heather Caygle: "Black lawmakers are hearing growing calls for Rep. John Conyers to resign and wondering why Sen. Al Franken isn't getting the same treatment. Members of the Congressional Black Caucus have been privately airing concerns about a double standard within Democrats' ranks since sexual harassment allegations against Conyers, the longest serving House member and a founder of the CBC, first surfaced last week. Their concerns were thrust into the open Thursday when Conyers' lawyer hinted that Conyers was being treated differently than Franken because of race." <http://politi.co/2AJ9udK>

**-- "Congress secretly paid nearly \$100,000 to settle harassment claims against disgraced congressman,"** by ABC News' Justin Fishel: "The Congressional Office of Compliance secretly paid close to \$100,000 in taxpayer funds to settle sexual harassment claims from at least two young male staffers who worked for disgraced former Congressman Eric Massa, multiple sources with direct knowledge of the matter told ABC News. The claims were settled after Massa, a Democrat from upstate New York, resigned in 2010 amid a pending ethics investigation into allegations he groped and sexually harassed members of his staff." <http://abcn.ws/2j3MZWu>

**-- ELANA SCHOR and HEATHER CAYGLE: "Lawmakers have carte blanche to cut secret harassment settlements"** <http://politi.co/2jAKiv2>

\*\*\*\*\* **A message from PhRMA:** According to new analysis from the Moran Company, hospitals mark up medicine prices, on average, nearly 500 percent. The analysis of 20 medicines also found a hospital is paid 2.5 times what the biopharmaceutical company, who brought the medicine to market, receives. While hospital markups lead to higher costs for patients, employers and payers, these markups are often overlooked in conversations about medicine costs. As the provider market continues to become more concentrated and the number of medicines being administered in hospital-owned facilities is growing, the amount hospitals mark up medicine prices needs greater scrutiny. <http://onphr.ma/2Ba0TOa> \*\*\*\*\*

**DRIP, DRIP, DRIP -- "Matt Lauer's lawyers trying to get him \$30M payout after firing,"** by N.Y. Post's Emily Smith: "Sources close to the disgraced newsman say his team is working on a plan to get him paid through the remainder of his \$20 million a year contract - which still has a year and a half to run. A source close to Lauer's team said, 'They are currently looking at his contract and determining whether the claims against him, which clearly would affect any moral clause in his contract and his ensuing termination would cut off his contractual rights to be paid through to the end of his contract.' ... [M]oral clauses are often included in TV contracts and specify that talent could be fired without pay if they bring the company into any disrepute." <http://pge.sx/2jBawqX>

**-- "Vice fires three employees amid investigations into sexual harassment,"** by CNN's Brian Stelter: "Vice Media fired three employees on Thursday amid a probe into

sexual harassment and improper workplace conduct, according to a memo obtained by CNNMoney. Vice did not name the employees. But the company said 'the conduct of these employees ranged from verbal and sexual harassment to other behavior that is inconsistent with our policies, our values, and the way in which we believe colleagues should work together.'" <http://cnmmon.ie/2j5MRG1>

-- **BOSTON GLOBE: "Four men allege sexual misconduct by Senate president's husband,"** by Yvonne Abraham. <http://bit.ly/2i8HHZ6>

-- **"It's Not Just the Matt Lauers and the Mark Halperins:** The media's testosterone-fueled culture is driving talented and dedicated women out of journalism. I should know- TV news' sexist culture drove me away," by Shannon Van Sant in POLITICO Magazine: <http://politi.co/2AKNIqi>

**MEDIAWATCH -- "White House extends special holiday-party welcome to behind-the-scenes CNN staffers,"** by WaPo's Erik Wemple: "CNN journalists, buffeted by brutal news cycles, are as festive as any other media types around this time of year. Yet the network decided that it wouldn't be spreading the joy at this year's White House Christmas party. ... The White House, however, is showing some disdain for top-down holiday-party invitation rejections. According to a CNN source, White House deputy press secretary Lindsay Walters on Thursday afternoon sent the following appeal to a dozen-plus CNN staffers who work behind the scenes to produce the network's coverage of news at the White House:

**"Good Afternoon, The President wanted you to know that while the rest of CNN** will not be attending the Christmas reception, if you're able to he is still happy to have you - the cameramen, sound, and other technicians, who work so tirelessly behind the scenes - to come participate. You and your guest will be on the list at the entrance. Please note this invitation is nontransferable. Best, Lindsay." <http://wapo.st/2BAIvyl>

## Playbookers

**SPOTTED:** Rick Perry in the Air France lounge yesterday at Dulles, sitting at the bar on the first class side. Jane Harman was separately in the lounge. **Pic** <http://bit.ly/2jCgSwD> ... Donald Trump Jr. and his wife and kids leaving BLT Prime at the Trump Hotel. Rep. Peter King (R-N.Y.) and Rep. French Hill (R-Ark.) were also in the lobby of the hotel last night. ... actor Dean Cain, "Superman," in the lobby bar of the Madison hotel yesterday. He and Kathie Lee Gifford later hosted the White House's National Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony ... Rep. Jim Renacci (R-Ohio) yesterday flying from DCA to Columbus on American Airlines.

**SPOTTED** at a pre-holiday party for the Senate Press Secretaries Association hosted by Playbook, Edelman and the Wine and Spirits Wholesalers of America: Doug Andres, Rob Rehg, Luke Bolar, Becca Steele, Julia Krieger, Alex Moe, Sarah Swinehart, Katie

Waldman, David Lawder, Emily Teitelbaum, Peter Segall, Taylor Holgate, Patrick Temple-West, Ian Kullgren, Lynne Williams, Jillian Rogers, Alicia Amling, John Shinkle, Amy Harder, Steve Rebelliot, Todd Deutsch, Will Mauldin, Walter Suskind, Bennett Richardson, Sean Neary, Luke Bolar, Peter Cook, Alexa Papadopoulos, Katie Waldman, Jessica Brady, Olivia Beavers, Julia Manchester and Nihal Krishan.

**SPOTTED** at Hank's on the Hill last night at a Blue Dogs party: Reps. Kyrsten Sinema (D-Ariz.), Kurt Schrader (D-Ore.), Dan Lipinski (D-Ill.), David Scott (D-Ga.), Sanford Bishop (D-Ga.), Jim Costa (D-Calif.), Stephanie Murphy (D-Fla.), Brad Schneider (D-Ill.), Henry Cuellar (D-Texas), Vicente Gonzalez (D-Ga.), Tom O'Halleran (D-Ariz.), Jim Cooper (D-Tenn.) and Charlie Crist (D-Fla.).

**FIRST IN PLAYBOOK -- AMY CHOZICK**, who has been on book leave since February, will return to the New York Times today as a writer-at-large, doing features on business, politics, media and culture. Her memoir about covering both of Hillary Clinton's presidential campaigns is set to get published in the spring.

**SUNDAY SO FAR -- CBS' "Face the Nation"**: Sens. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) and Angus King (I-Maine) ... OMB Director Mick Mulvaney. Political panel: Ron Brownstein, Ezra Klein, Julie Pace and Ramesh Ponnuru

-- **"Fox News Sunday"**: Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster ... Panel: Ret. Gen. Jack Keane, Michele Flournoy ... Panel: Karl Rove, Jennifer Griffin, Jason Chaffetz, Juan Williams ... Power Player: George Shultz

-- **ABC's "This Week"**: Panel: Jen Psaki, Megan Murphy, Charles Blow, Alex Castellanos, Chris Ruddy

-- **NBC's "Meet the Press"**: Corey Lewandowski and David Bossie. Panel: Eddie S. Glaude, Jr., Doris Kearns Goodwin, Mike Murphy and Danielle Pletka

-- **CNN's "State of the Union"**: Sen. Tim Scott (R-S.C.)

-- **CNN's "Inside Politics,"** hosted by John King: Julie Hirschfeld Davis, Julie Pace, Sahil Kapur, Michael Warren

**BIRTHDAY OF THE DAY: Karen Tumulty**, WaPo national political correspondent. **A fun fact about Karen**: "When I was 16, I was crowned queen of the Alamo Trail Ride. Rhinestone tiara, satin sash, purple suede chaps, the whole outfit. (I've got pictures, if you don't believe me.)" **Read her Playbook Plus Q&A:** <http://politi.co/2Aguyr7>

**BIRTHDAYS**: Natalie Wyeth Earnest, celebrating with dinner at Iron Gate and a "babysitter for the kids" (hubby tip: Josh) ... Jason Maloni of JadeRoq, celebrating by attending a fundraiser at his kids' pre-school ... Jen Psaki, VP at the Carnegie Endowment and a CNN contributor ... Florida Gov. Rick Scott is 65 ... POLITICO Magazine's Elizabeth Ralph ... Politico's Jacqueline Klimas and James Senkbeil ...

former CIA director Stansfield Turner is 94 ... Joel Miller ... Charlie Anderson, senior adviser for Sen. Michael Bennett ... Kyle Lierman, founder and CEO of Civic Advisors ... Wayne Ting ... Raul Alvirar ... Susan Stilts Collins ... Sen. Gary Peters (D-Mich.) is 59 ... Jared Scott Small ... Tim Purdon ... Ani Toumajan, LA for Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.) ... Shin Inouye, director of communications and media relations at the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights ... Marylouise Oates, former journalist, novelist and wife of Bob Shrum (h/t Tammy Haddad) ... Safra A. Catz, CEO of Oracle, is 56 ...

... **Natalie Ravitz**, SVP of comms for the NFL ... Josh Kraushaar, politics editor at National Journal, is 36 ... Sean Higgins, press secretary for Sen. Heidi Heitkamp (h/t Mitchell Rivard) ... Marty Chase is 77 ... Bush WH alum Jenny Lynn Buntin ... Bruce Kieloch is 52 ... NPR's Carrie Johnson ... Yochi Dreazen, foreign editor at Vox ... JS Kim of Credit Suisse ... Berry Kurland ... Jordan Lieberman of Audience Partners ... Mona Salama ... Brett Lieberman ... Jeri Henson Dies ... Reggie Smith ... Ryan Bell ... Hayley D'Antuono ... Terri New, founder and president of Capital Strategies, a political and philanthropic fundraising firm based in LA (h/t Jordan Markwith) ... Ed Fox ... Bill Manger ... Bruce Young ... Charlie Anderson ... Becky Weissman ... Stephanie Yousef ... Jake Kuitwaard ... David Seldin, partner at Brunswick Group ... Randy Bauer ... Dan McGuire ... Donnie Fowler ... Jamie Domini (h/ts Teresa Vilmain)

\*\*\*\*\* **A message from PhRMA:** According to new analysis from the Moran Company, hospitals mark up medicine prices, on average, nearly 500 percent. The analysis of 20 medicines also found a hospital is paid 2.5 times what the biopharmaceutical company, who brought the medicine to market, receives. While hospital markups lead to higher costs for patients, employers and payers, these markups are often overlooked in conversations about medicine costs. As the provider market continues to become more concentrated and the number of medicines being administered in hospital-owned facilities is growing, the amount hospitals mark up medicine prices needs greater scrutiny. <http://onphr.ma/2Ba0TOa> \*\*\*\*\*

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