

-- CONGRESSIONAL REPUBLICANS GET THROWN INTO THE FIRE. Republican leaders are sending their troops home after flailing for weeks while trying to pass a health-care plan. In fact, they've passed almost nothing. We expect sparks at town-hall meetings and mounting frustration at the inaction in D.C. **ONE FIG LEAF:** Late last night, after Speaker Ryan met with Trump at the White House, the GOP leadership announced a hastily scheduled procedural hearing on a narrow health-care provision that creates risk-sharing pools -- a way to help pay for insurance for people with serious illnesses. They are desperate to show some sort of movement before leaving town. And this is not even a full step -- this is moving forward by an inch. **THE MESSAGE** GOP leaders want their members to bring home: we're making progress.

ATTN GOP: THIS MIGHT NOT BE SUCH A GOOD IDEA -- Risk pools might not be the silver bullet Republicans are looking for. As POLITICO health care guru Joanne Kenen told us: "This is something that approximately 30-35 states (red and blue) tried many for years. And it didn't work. The pools were really expensive. Sick people ended up with huge premiums and out of pocket expenses. Many states had waiting lists. The pools had all sort of restrictions -- like you had to go into the pool because you had cancer, but the pool wouldn't cover cancer for the first six months or a year, and so forth."

BACK-CHANNEL BLOWUP -- "Ivanka's secret Planned Parenthood outreach," by Annie Karni: "In the weeks following her father's inauguration, Ivanka Trump quietly reached out to the president of Planned Parenthood seeking common ground on the contentious issue of abortion. The first daughter requested a sit-down with Cecile Richards, the head of Planned Parenthood and a vocal surrogate for Hillary Clinton on the 2016 campaign trail, to talk about an organization that is being targeted by Republicans seeking to defund it because it provides abortions, among other women's health services like cancer screenings. ...

"But the strategic outreach hasn't seemed to earn Ivanka Trump much public goodwill. Since Ivanka Trump's sitdown with Richards, what started as a cordial relationship has soured - and any effort on the part of the politically savvy first daughter to backchannel to the non-profit has transformed into a bitter battle. Richards, fighting the Trump administration, has publicly rebuked Ivanka Trump for her 'deafening' silence on the healthcare bill. On Wednesday night, Richards again took aim at the first daughter, now a senior White House official with a security clearance and an office in the West Wing. 'Anyone who works in this White House is responsible for addressing why women are in the crosshairs of basically every single policy we've

seen in this administration,' Richards said, speaking at the Women in the World conference in New York City." <http://politi.co/20H1m7j>

-- **FOR THE RECORD:** Annie seems to have unearthed the second major misstep by Ivanka and Jared. The first was their Aspen expedition as the health-care bill was going up in flames ... **ALSO** read Annie on Trump hosting Rush Limbaugh and Jeannine Piro for dinner at 1600 Pennsylvania. <http://politi.co/205Noe1>

TRUMP'S FAVORITE MEDIA OUTLET: THE NEW YORK TIMES -- Glenn Thrush and Maggie Haberman got an Oval Office sitdown with President Donald Trump, where he said Susan Rice might have committed a crime (<http://nyti.ms/20CvS2G>), and reminded Glenn and Maggie that he rode between the subway cars as a kid.

THRUSH: "We'll, you're kind of doing that politically now, so" - **TRUMP:** [Unintelligible.] "That could be the best statement -" *Transcript of the interview* <http://nyti.ms/2p49GdS>

-- **TRUMP ON BILL O'REILLY:** "Personally, I think he shouldn't have settled. Because you should have taken it all the way; I don't think Bill did anything wrong. ... I think he's a person I know well. He is a good person."

-- **NYT GOES LOCAL ON A1:** Headline from the interview in the New York and national editions: **"In Interview, Trump Stays Vague On Fate of City's Transit Project"** : "President Trump said he was considering 'accelerating' the introduction of his \$1 trillion infrastructure bill -- but he pointedly refused to say whether he planned to include two major New York City transportation projects that his budget for next year would defund. Mr. Trump, speaking in a wide-ranging interview in the Oval Office on Wednesday, described the infrastructure package as a high-value legislative sweetener that he could attach to a revived Affordable Care Act repeal bill or tax code overhaul to attract bipartisan support that thus far he had neither sought nor received.

"Infrastructure is so popular that I might want to use it for another bill," said Mr. Trump, who is in need of a legislative win after the humbling defeat of his health care bill last month. 'Infrastructure is so popular with the Democrats and pretty popular with the Republicans. A lot of Republicans want infrastructure, too.'"

<http://nyti.ms/2p4dwDA>

-- **ACTUALLY, MR. PRESIDENT** ... Infrastructure is definitely popular among Democrats, but with Republicans, it's complicated. Your party has spent the last half-