

own private business. ...

**"The Washington Post identified more than 45 events** since Election Day in which outside groups paid to rent space at Mar-a-Lago. Hedge-fund investors noshed by the pool. Zoo animals prowled for the entertainment of donors. Men in military gear dropped from a helicopter near the lakefront cocktail bar and stormed a lawn full of socialites as part of a benefit for the Navy SEAL Foundation. In at least 10 of those cases, the events turned out to be a little bigger, and to raise a little more money, than in past years, according to interviews with event organizers. That often meant that they paid Trump's club a little more money.

**"The reason, some organizers said, was that Trump's event customers** could offer the grandeur of the presidency as an added attraction for potential attendees. The trend is likely to continue next year, as some charities planning Mar-a-Lago events for the 2018 season are hoping the dates they book coincide with times that Trump is staying at the club." <http://wapo.st/2qFALLY>

**\*\*\*\*\* A message from PhRMA: Patients share the costs of medicines. They should share the savings.** Robust negotiations between biopharmaceutical companies and insurers often result in significant rebates and discounts. Insurers should share more of these rebates with patients. Providing access to discounted prices at the point of sale could dramatically lower patients' out-of-pocket costs. Learn more at <http://onphr.ma/2pdaE7m>. \*\*\*\*\*

**FASCINATING MOVE -- JOSH HOLMES**, a longtime adviser to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell who now runs Cavalry LLC, said on "Fox News Sunday" that McConnell thinks Merrick Garland for FBI director is a "fantastic idea." Of course, Garland holds a prize judgeship -- the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia -- and Republicans would love to have the opportunity to fill it. **NOTABLE:** Sen. John Cornyn (R-Texas), the No. 2 Senate Republican, is also up for FBI director.

**SUNDAY BEST -- CHUCK TODD** speaks with **REX TILLERSON** on **NBC'S "MEET THE PRESS": TILLERSON** frames Trump's trip abroad: **TODD** : "I know there's a big trip, President Trump's first foreign trip to the Middle East. The president was pretty tough on all things Saudi Arabia in various interviews that I had with him during the campaign. At one point candidate Donald Trump said it's ridiculous that the United States gives so much assistance to the Saudis, who wouldn't be there except for us."

**"He even questioned how the Saudis treat women .** How the Saudis treat gay people. Now he's going to go there, give a speech in Riyadh. Is he going to bring these issues up? Are you going to bring these issues up? Of human rights issues with Saudi Arabia and with their, let's shall we say, weak democratic reforms?"

**TILLERSON:** "Well, Chuck, this is a very important trip that the president will be embarking on later in the week. I think, as you know, he's going to visit, on the first half of the trip, three countries. Great centers that represent important religions in the world. The Muslim faith in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Judaism when he visits Israel, and Christianity when he visits the pope in the Vatican. And I think the important aspect to this visit that the president is making is to bring a message of unity among all of these people of faith, among these great religions. That he strongly believes that it is the strength of the faith of people in these religions that will stand up and ultimately be victorious over these forces of terrorism.

**"The terrible faces of violence that we see in ISIL,** Daesh and al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations around the world. And so I think it is a very important trip on the president's part to call upon all people of faith in these religions to stand together for peace and stand up to this face of terrorism, wherever it shows itself anywhere in the world."

**-- ROBERT GATES** speaks with **JOHN DICKERSON** on **CBS'S "FACE THE NATION":** **DICKERSON:** "Friday we traveled to William & Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia, to speak with former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates. We began by asking him about FBI Director Comey's firing. ... What does that say to you, based on your experience?" **GATES:** "Not terribly well done. You know, I fired a lot of senior people myself and I think the key, when you feel compelled to remove a senior official, is essentially to have all your ducks in a row at the beginning. Have everybody understand what the rationale was." ...

**DICKERSON:** "What advice would you give the president before his first big foreign trip that he's about to take?" **GATES:** "That's a good question. I think that the key will be to limit spontaneity to areas that are fun or that sort of say something about you as a real person. I think when it comes to the issues, I'd advise him to stick to the script. But, I mean, he is going to have some very tough conversations and he's going to be talking about some very tough and complicated issues in all of the places that he visits. And -- but I think -- I think anytime a president does things that are humanizing, I think it's - it's good."