CALENDAR:

The Senate will come back Monday and stay in session through Thursday, while the House will come back into session Tuesday – technically, but not really – and stay in session through Friday.

LAST WEEK ON THE HOUSE FLOOR:

The House was in recess last week.

THIS WEEK ON THE HOUSE FLOOR:

The House will return on Tuesday, and will take up five bills under Suspension of the Rules. Any recorded votes requested will be postponed until Wednesday, which is another way of saying they’re not really going to be in session until Wednesday.

On Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, the House will consider another eight bills on the Suspension Calendar.

In addition, the House is scheduled to consider H.R. 2339, the Protecting American Lungs and Reversing the Youth Tobacco Epidemic Act of 2019.

LAST WEEK ON THE SENATE FLOOR:

The Senate was in recess last week.

THIS WEEK ON THE SENATE FLOOR:

The Senate will convene at 3 PM on Monday, and Wisconsin Democrat Sen. Tammy Baldwin will deliver Washington’s Farewell Address.

Following the Farewell Address, the Senate will resume consideration of Robert Anthony Molloy to be a Judge for the District Court of the Virgin Islands. At 5:30 PM the Senate will
move to a roll call vote on cloture for the nomination of Robert Anthony Molloy to be a Judge for the District Court of the Virgin Islands for a term of ten years.

Based on the Majority Leader’s cloture filings, I would then predict the rest of the week in the Senate will be spent dealing with the following nominations and legislation:

- Silvia Carreno-Coll to be a United States District Judge for the District of Puerto Rico
- Motion to Proceed to S. 3275, the Pain Capable Unborn Child Act, which would make illegal the abortion of a fetus 20 weeks old or older
- Motion to Proceed to S. 311, the Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act, which would establish requirements for the degree of care a health care practitioner must exercise “in the event a child is born alive following an abortion or attempted abortion”
- Katharine MacGregor to be Deputy Secretary of the Interior
- Travis Greaves to be a Judge of the United States Tax Court for a term of 15 years

**BORDER SECURITY/IMMIGRATION:**

Speaking two weeks ago to the National Sheriff’s Association 2020 Winter Legislative and Technology Conference in Washington, DC, Attorney General Bill Barr announced that the Department of Justice would immediately file multiple lawsuits against so-called “sanctuary” jurisdictions for unconstitutionally interfering with federal immigration law enforcement.

"Let us state the reality upfront and as clearly as possible," Barr began. "When we are talking about sanctuary cities, we are talking about policies that are designed to allow criminal aliens to escape. These policies are not about people who came to our country illegally but have otherwise been peaceful and productive members of society. Their express purpose is to shelter aliens whom local law enforcement has already arrested for other crimes. This is neither lawful nor sensible."

The Department of Justice filed suit against the state of New Jersey, and King County in the state of Washington. The department had previously filed suits against California and New York.

On another sanctuary jurisdiction front, Sen. Thom Tillis and his North Carolina Republican colleague Ted Budd last summer introduced the “Justice for Victims of Sanctuary Cities Act of 2019,” which approaches the problem of sanctuary cities from a different angle – it creates a private right of civil action by a citizen who wants to sue a sanctuary jurisdiction for damages caused by an illegal immigrant who was released into the general public rather than turned over to federal authorities with a detainer request. There are 13 cosponsors in the Senate and 29 in the House, and almost half of the cosponsors in the House added their names to the bill after the president mentioned it in his State of the Union Address three weeks ago. The House bill designation is H.R. 3964, and the Senate bill designation is S. 2059.

Meanwhile, Politico reported last week that some in the Trump Administration want to make up for not yet passing a larger comprehensive immigration reform effort by passing a smaller immigration reform effort. The problem is, it looks like it would involve expanding temporary worker visas and increasing the number of immigrants allowed into the United States,
contradicting the president’s 2016 campaign promises to reduce the number of immigrants. And to make matters worse, some involved in talking about a potential deal are also talking about using the deal to come to some kind of compromise on amnesty for the so-called “Dreamers.”

Congressman Chip Roy of Texas sent a letter to Senate Judiciary Chairman Lindsey Graham warning him off such a deal. You can find it in this week’s Suggested Reading.

PARDONS:

On Tuesday, President Trump exercised his constitutional “Power to grant Reprieves and Pardons for offenses against the United States” to grant clemency to 11 individuals, including former Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich, former Wall Street guy Michael Milken, former San Francisco 49ers owner Edward DeBartolo, Jr., and former NYPD Commissioner Bernard Kerik. In addition to the celebrity convicts whose sentences were pardoned or commuted, there were three other female convicts whose sentences he commuted – Crystal Munoz, Tynice Nichole Hall, and Judith Negron, who came to the president’s attention because of another former convict whose sentence he had commuted earlier, Alice Marie Johnson.

PERSONNEL:

A week and a half ago, a senior intelligence official briefed members of the House Intelligence Committee in a classified hearing to the effect that Russia is again trying to interfere in the American presidential election on behalf of President Trump. The president learned about this after it happened, from Intelligence Committee ranking member Devin Nunes.

Not surprisingly, President Trump was not pleased to learn that his administration’s intelligence community had come to a significant conclusion regarding Russian interference and had failed to inform him of that conclusion before informing lawmakers. The president’s response to this information management snafu was to bring in a new head of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. He replaced Joe Maguire with current U.S. Ambassador to Germany Richard Grenell, who will take the title Acting Director of National Intelligence. Maguire’s tenure as Acting Director of National Intelligence was slated to end in mid-March anyway, so he only had a few weeks left in the position.

Toward the end of the week, Trump floated a trial balloon – there was a leak he was considering nominating Georgia Republican Congressman Doug Collins, the ranking member of the House Judiciary Committee who so strongly defended President Trump during the impeachment hearings, to the post on a permanent basis. But Collins immediately knocked down the trial balloon, saying he was committed to his campaign for the U.S. Senate in Georgia.

RUSSIA COLLUSION FALLOUT:

Former Trump adviser Roger Stone, convicted on seven counts of lying to Congress and witness tampering, was sentenced to 40 months in a federal prison, right in the middle of the federal sentencing guidelines. But Judge Amy Berman Jackson stayed the incarceration order while she
considers Stone’s request for a new trial – a request based on a recent revelation about the rather obvious political bias of the jury forewoman, who, after the trial ended, revealed that she had once been a Democratic candidate for Congress and who posted to social media accounts anti-Trump comments and anti-Stone comments.

This means that, as far as Russia collusion story prosecutions are concerned, we’ve only got one episode left to finish up – the sentencing for former National Security Advisor Gen. Michael Flynn, who has replaced his original set of lawyers with a lawyer who seems to actually want to defend her client.

THE BIDENS:

In what may turn out to be one of the great ironies of the 2020 election season – now that former Vice President Joe Biden’s electoral fortunes may have fallen so far so fast that there is really no need to disqualify him as a candidate for president – three Republican Senate committee chairmen are determined to investigate his and his son’s dealings in Ukraine.

Senate Finance Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley, Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee Chairman Ron Johnson, and Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Lindsey Graham have been requesting documents from agencies and departments of the U.S. Government since last fall, and have committed to reviewing U.S. Government actions toward Ukraine during the Obama years.

Stay tuned. Joe Biden may soon be fading from the discussion about Democratic presidential prospects, but the investigations into his and his son’s dealings with Ukraine may be just getting started.

2020 DEMOCRATS:

Bernie Sanders followed his wins in Iowa and New Hampshire with a decisive win in the Nevada caucuses on Saturday. The next contest will be in South Carolina next Saturday, the 29th. That’s going to be the first Democratic delegate selection contest where African-American voters make up a majority of likely voters in the primary, and former Vice President Joe Biden is counting on strong support from that community to keep his campaign alive with a win in the Palmetto State. But based on his showings in the first three delegate selection contests, there’s a real question as to whether or not his campaign can go forward.

Anyone who watched last Wednesday’s Nevada Democratic debate was delighted by one of the most entertaining debates ever broadcast. It wasn’t three minutes into the debate before Elizabeth Warren tore off Michael Bloomberg’s head, and that was just the beginning. For the next two hours, everyone on stage was throwing haymakers as if they knew this was their last chance to change the course of the campaign’s momentum. The problem was, no one was throwing punches at the socialist front-runner, Bernie Sanders. Everyone other than Sen. Warren was trying to consolidate the position as the anti-Bernie candidate. And we know how that turns out – who remembers Ted Cruz and John Kasich and Marco Rubio and Chris Christie
and Jeb Bush and others all trying to establish themselves as the anti-Trump candidate, only to realize too late that was the wrong fight?

The next Democratic debate is on Tuesday night. Look for Bloomberg to come out swinging directly at Bernie. If he doesn’t lay a glove on Sanders, the rules of the Democratic nominating process are going to kick in, and Sanders is going to arrive in at their convention in Milwaukee with an unstoppable bunch of delegates.

SUGGESTED READING

JENNY BETH MARTIN/TEA PARTY PATRIOTS:

USA Today: Jenny Beth Martin: President Trump Has a Right to His Opinions and To Remove Executive Branch Personnel

Hill: Jenny Beth Martin: There Is No Centrist Democrat Running for President in 2020

Conservative HQ: Conservatives Must Stop National Popular Vote Interstate Compact (NPV)

BORDER SECURITY/IMMIGRATION:

Politico: Pentagon To Shift $3.8B For Fighter Planes, Ships Toward Border Wall

WSJ: Justice Department Files Lawsuits Over Sanctuary Policies

FOX: Barr Announces Sweeping New Sanctions, 'Significant Escalation' Against Left-Wing Sanctuary Cities

Politico: Trump Seeks Deal On Foreign Workers That Could Anger Base

House: Chip Roy Letter

Politico: Why The White House Immigration Plan Failed

PARDONS:

NYT: Trump Grants Clemency To Blagojevich, Milken And Kerik

NYT: The 11 Criminals Granted Clemency by Trump Had One Thing in Common: Connections

Politico: Trump Announces A Blitz Of Pardons And Commutations

PERSONNEL:
NYT: Trump Adviser Pushes Utah Congressman For Top Intelligence Post

Axios: Scoop: Trump Pulls Nomination For Former US Attorney For DC To Treasury Post

Politico: Trump Takes Post-Impeachment Reckoning To New Level

Axios: Top NSC Official Reassigned To Energy Department Amid 'Anonymous' Fallout

WaPo: Senior Intelligence Official Told Lawmakers That Russia Wants To See Trump Reelected

Hill: O'Brien: Maguire Was Not Pushed Out Over Russia Briefing

NYT: Trump Names Richard Grenell As Acting Head Of Intelligence

NYT: How Trump's Relationship With Barr Got So Complicated

Hill: Trump Considering Doug Collins As Nominee For Director Of National Intelligence

AJC: Collins Won't Accept Trump's Intel Post, Vows To Stay In Georgia

Axios: Exclusive: Trump's "Deep State" Hit List

RUSSIA COLLUSION FALLOUT:

FOX: Roger Stone Should Get New Trial In Light Of Juror’s Anti-Trump Tweets

WT: Secret Letter To William Barr Set Stage For Independent Michael Flynn Review

Hill: DOJ Won't Charge Former FBI Deputy Director McCabe

NYT: Andrew McCabe, Ex-FBI Official, Will Not Be Charged In Lying Case

Hill: Roger Stone Asks For New Trial

CNBC: Anti-Trump Social Media Posts by Roger Stone Jury Forewoman Fuel Controversy in Case

FOX: Judge Andrew Napolitano: Roger Stone Deserves Justice -- There's No Evidence He Received It

NRO: McCarthy: Stone Sentencing Ends Russia Collusion, Part I

THE BIDENS:

Politico: Majority Say Biden Son's Ukraine Job Was Inappropriate

Hill: GOP Duo Moves Ahead With Biden Investigation
WaPo: Attorney General William Barr Says Justice Department Has Created 'Intake Process' To Vet Rudy Giuliani's Information On Bidens

BuzzFeed: Republicans Chuck Grassley, Ron Johnson And Lindsay Graham Are Investigating Joe Biden And Ukraine

2020 DEMOCRATS:

RCP: Trump Camp Dismisses Sanders, Homes In On Bloomberg

NRO: 2020 Campaign: Mike Bloomberg Is Bernie Sander's Dream Rival

FOX: Bloomberg Heard In 2015 Audio Clip Defending 'Stop And Frisk', Throwing Minority Kids Against Wall

Politico: Bloomberg Bombs In Debate Debut

NBC News: Sanders Opens Up Double Digit National Lead In Primary Race

WaPo: Mike Bloomberg Has Been Battling Women's Allegations Of Sexist, Profane Comments For Years

MRCTV: Bloomberg Caught On Tape Saying Elderly Should Be Denied Medical Care Because Of Cost Overruns

Axios: Bloomberg Offers To Release Women from 3 Nondisclosure Agreements

Hill: Sanders Scores Decisive Victory in Nevada

NYT: Russia Is Said To Be Interfering To Aid Sanders in Democratic Primaries

WSJ: Bernie Sanders Was Warned Russia Is Trying To Boost His Presidential Campaign

MISCELLANEOUS:

WSJ: The Trials Of Bill Barr

CNN: DC Statehood Bill Sent To Full House For Consideration

Politico: Senate To Rein In Trump's War Powers After Iran Strike

CNN: Ruth Bader Ginsburg Says Deadline To Ratify Equal Rights Amendment Has Expired: 'I'd Like It To Start Over'

Politico: Senate Budget Committee Chair Won't Hold Hearings On Trump Budget
WaPo: Trump's Support For Bipartisan Senate Drug Pricing Bill May Not Be Enough To Push It Into Law

Hill: Senate Braces For Fight Over Impeachment Whistleblower Testimony

Hill: Avenatti Found Guilty In Nike Extortion Trial