

The Fairfield Prep Political Awareness Society presents:

# Zeitgeist



**Spirit of the Times**

**February 2016**

## **The Fairfield Prep Political Awareness Society**

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### **About the Society**

In a matter of years, our generation will be the status quo. We will be running the businesses and casting the votes and contributing to the culture that will serve to identify our country for decades to come. As such, it is our duty to cultivate a devotion to political curiosity and vigilance so that we can shape this future in the most well informed manner possible. The Political Awareness Society is a part of that cultivation, providing an environment for students to discuss and debate what is going on in the world and develop their own unique perspectives that they can carry with them into the adult world. We meet every Thursday afternoon in Mr. Szablewicz's room (B407). All are welcome to attend.

**Note:** The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the contributors and are in no way intended to reflect those of Fairfield Prep as an institution.

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Benjamin Martinez '17

## **NASA's 2016 Budget and What It Means for America**

On December 18, the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives passed a bill that would allocate a whopping \$19.3 billion to the budget of NASA for 2016, which will almost certainly be approved by President Obama. This is almost \$1 billion more than NASA's initial budget request, the most money ever been given to NASA. Although, as a percentage it is still far below 1 percent of the federal budget and, therefore, much less than the 4.4 percent of the federal budget NASA received in 1966, at the height of the space race.

What exactly led to this massive increase in NASA's budget? The answer to that question can be found by picking apart NASA's budget to see how and where Congress and the Senate want NASA spending its efforts. But why now? The answer to this is simple: it comes from the copious amounts of public interest, which have been generated by the flashy successes of private corporations like SpaceX and Blue

Origin, as well as the fascinating scientific findings of astronomers from around the world. It is also safe to say that Hollywood's newfound interest in realistic space exploration (with movies such as Gravity in 2013, Interstellar in 2014, and The Martian in 2015) has helped generate public interest, as well.

## **Science**

NASA requested \$5.3 million, but it received \$5.6 million. Earth Science is, evidently, the division of NASA that studies Earth's climate and atmosphere. The slight decrease in funding for Earth Science can be accounted for by the fact that both Congress and the Senate are controlled by Republican majorities. Republicans tend to be far less concerned with climate change and the like and, therefore, do not believe that it should be a priority for NASA. In addition, NASA received \$600,000 more than requested for Planetary Science, the division that focuses on the study of planets and planet-like objects in the solar system. Congress saw what NASA could do in this field from the stunning and mysterious images of the dwarf

planet, Ceres, and asteroid, Vesta, the superstar images of Pluto and Charon, and the discovery of liquid water under the surface of Saturn's moon, Enceladus. However, while all of these breakthroughs almost certainly contributed to this budget increase, it was primarily brought about by the Red Planet, Mars. Congress wants to see more money put into the study of the fourth rock from the Sun because it wants the United States to be first nation to put a human on Mars, and it wants it done as soon as possible. As we continue to break down this budget, it can be seen that much of this revolves around Mars and our quest to be the first to stick an American flag in Martian soil. Likewise, this increase can be credited to the development of the James Webb telescope, the successor to the great and prolific Hubble Space Telescope, which will have the capacity to analyze the atmospheres of distant planets in distant star systems in order to scan for the presence of oxygen, a nearly undeniable indicator of life.



## Aeronautics and Space Technology

Aeronautics is the development of aircraft and new aviation technologies. Throughout history, NASA's aeronautics division has revolutionized many kinds of aviation, from commercial to military. Commercial aviation, in particular, has gone a long time without any significant developments. Passenger planes look very similar today to what they did more than fifty years ago. The field is in desperate need of something new, and both NASA and Congress are well aware of that fact.

## Exploration

Human Exploration Capabilities is exactly what it sounds like, and the near \$1 billion more than requested that NASA received for it shows just how important a manned mission to Mars would be for Congress and the Senate. Because of the moon landings in the 1960s and '70s, they both know what a manned expedition like this can do for national unity and patriotism. Orion, or the Multi-Purpose Crew Vehicle, is intended to take American astronauts on many deep space missions, like, for example,

a mission to Mars. The Space Launch System is the massive rocket that will hoist Orion and her crew into deep space, and it will be the largest and most powerful rocket ever built by man. The commercial spaceflight program is comprised of the money that NASA provides to private contractors to fly space missions while its own shuttle program is out of commission. NASA's request for this program was high, and Congress happily agreed to that request after the many successful launches carried out by Elon Musk's SpaceX, whose ultimate goal is to journey to and colonize Mars, and the United Launch Alliance (or ULA, the joint Boeing-Lockheed Martin space travel venture) in 2015.

### **Space Operations**

The amount of money allocated to the International Space Station was not yet specified in the bill, but it is unlikely that an increase will be offered over the amount that NASA requested. This, too, is a result of the desire to put men on Mars. Congress wants NASA to do away with the Space Station (which is technically still in the Earth's

atmosphere), in favor of deeper space habitats. These habitats, like the one Congress is pushing NASA to develop by 2018, would serve as a sort of "practice" habitat for living on Mars. Many of the problems that would be faced in a deep space habitat (note that a lunar base would be considered a deep space habitat), would be similar to the those dealt with on the long and arduous journey to Mars or on the Martian base itself. Also, the fact that Congress is pushing for this to be done by 2018 means that NASA will likely receive massive budgets up until at least that year.

Space exploration and research is one of the only issues our nation faces today that is largely bipartisan, and this bill garnered plenty of support from both sides of the aisle. If it were not as bipartisan as it is, then a budget like this would never have been able to pass Congress. The passage of this bill demonstrates how much can get done when politicians put aside their differences and work together. In a time of such intense political polarization, a manned mission to Mars is exactly what this nation needs. As previously stated, we saw what a mission like

this can do for national unity and pride in the Moon landings of the 20th Century. It is often said that, today, the country is the most divided it has been since the Civil War. Therefore, for the sake of our nation, we must give the people of the United States a common cause and a mission to rally around. We must continue to support NASA. We must, Senator Bill Nelson said, "Go back into space with Americans on American rockets, and [we must] go to Mars."

Here's a breakdown of NASA's 2016 budget:

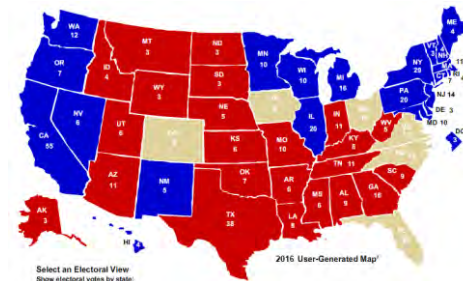
	NASA Requested (\$ in million)	NASA Received (\$ in million)
<b>Science</b>	<b>5,288.6</b>	<b>5,589.4</b>
Earth Science	1,947.3	1,921.0
Planetary Science	1,361.2	1,631.0
Astrophysics	709.1	730.6
James Webb Space Telescope	620.0	620.0
Other	651.0	688.0
<b>Aeronautics and Space Technology</b>	<b>1,296.2</b>	<b>1,326.5</b>
Aeronautics Research	571.4	640.0
Other	724.8	686.5
<b>Exploration</b>	<b>4,505.9</b>	<b>4,030.0</b>
Human Exploration Capabilities	2,862.9	3,680.0
Multi-Purpose Crew Vehicle (Orion)	1,096.3	1,270.0
Space Launch System	1,356.5	2,000.0
Commercial Space Flight	1,243.8	1,243.8 (moved to Space Ops)
<b>Space Operations</b>	<b>4,003.7</b>	<b>5,029.2</b>
International Space Station	3,105.6	not specified
Other	898.1	not specified
<b>Other</b>	<b>3,434.7</b>	<b>3,309.9</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>18,529.1</b>	<b>19,285.0</b>

Michael Turk '17

## Power to the People: The Changing Influence of the Media

After winning the Iowa Caucus on Monday night, Republican senator and presidential candidate Ted Cruz exclaimed that "the next president of the United States will not be chosen by the media, will not be chosen by the Washington establishment, will not be chosen by the lobbyists, but will be chosen by the most incredible, powerful force where all sovereignty resides in our nation — by we the people, the American people." After all the polling is over, it is not the media which guides our nation's future, but the people. Over the past several decades, how politicians interact with the media has changed drastically. Previously, the media have played key roles in politics, educating the public about the issues facing our nation, politicians' stances on them, and how they affect the American people. The media are meant to be institutions that cooperate with our nation's leaders in order to spread political awareness, especially in regard to the government's impact on the lives of the

people. While this is the way it truly should be, the modern media have been warped to emphasize a sense of entertainment, often resorting to highlighting the faults and missteps of politicians to please supporters. This negativity, which has spread throughout the world of media, is not entirely due to a change in how the media cover news; rather, it, to a great extent, stems from how the American people wish to have their news delivered to them.



More and more in the news, we witness the media aiming to point out the faults of our nation's leaders and make a spectacle of them. A prime example of this is exhibited through the media's endless criticism of Donald Trump. This issue is, to some extent, caused by today's partisan news networks, which have a need to please their supporters of one party or another. These partisan-leaning news outlets feel the need to

constantly criticize the opposing party of their supporters so that they can provide somewhat informative entertainment. For example, it is commonly acknowledged that networks like CNN and MSNBC lean toward the left of the political spectrum, while ones such as Fox News tend to advocate more right-wing stances. Because of these partisan biases within news networks, politicians often wish to search the media for the negative publicity they receive. Nowadays, it seems as if the enmity between the political world and the media only continues to be exacerbated, being especially prevalent since the beginning of the 2016 Presidential Election cycle.

During this presidential race, a number of candidates have criticized the media for how it has covered the election thus far. Republican candidates, in particular, have accused the “liberal media” of unfairly targeting their party. Presidential hopefuls Ted Cruz and Donald Trump have openly criticized the unfair questions asked to the candidates during the debates. While some of these candidates’ claims are ludicrous, there is an underlying problem which is constantly

occurring throughout the debates. At many of the seven Republican and five Democratic debates which have occurred so far in the race, there has been a similar theme of candidates pointing out an underhanded or unwarranted question asked. This trend illustrates the issue of the debate moderators wishing to pit the candidates against one another for the purpose of good entertainment.

Besides this, one of the candidates, Trump, has, on numerous occasions, requested apologies from media outlets or journalists on account of their “rude behavior” towards him. For months, he and his campaign have received perpetual coverage on virtually all major news networks. Many, in fact, believe that Trump’s significant popularity is somewhat due to the media’s constant coverage of him. This popularity, though, was squandered shortly before Trump arrived at the Iowa Caucus. Just days before the caucus, Trump decided not to attend a debate in Iowa hosted by Fox News because of the ongoing feud between the candidate and the news outlet. Politicos speculate that the candidate's absence during

the final debate may have cost him a win in Iowa. Moreover, this highlights how the American people are still the driving force that decide the outcomes of elections, no matter how the media cover them.

There is no doubt that the adversity between political candidates and the media has heightened in recent years; this is largely due to how the media have changed in order to influence the outcomes of elections instead of simply reporting them. In the past, the media have not had nearly the capabilities to sway voters toward one candidate or another which they possess today. This fact reveals that the modern media are flawed in how they go about bringing change to the political world. In addition, the relationship between politicians and the media is meant to be a symbiotic one, benefitting both parties for the greater good of the American people. This mutual relationship was well exhibited in President Obama's 2008 campaign, during which he utilized the media to his advantage and was referred to by the *New York Times* as "a king of social media." In total, how the media cover elections has changed immensely in the past several years, focusing less than

ever before on the voices of the public. The only way that we can amend this problem is to place the power in politics back in the hands of the people, as it rightfully should be in a democracy.



Nicholas Duffy '18

### **Ted Cruz: The Uncompromising Man**

Ted Cruz is a Republican Senator from Texas running for President of the United States. In Congress, he has been known for being a supporter of the far-right wing. During his short time in Congress, he has also contributed to numerous government shutdowns. Cruz's career in the Senate has been unproductive, as well. He has contributed little to nothing on legislation, and he has failed to develop any strong alliances within the Senate. His

arrogance and unwillingness to cooperate have made it difficult for him to be successful in the Senate. This leads to my opinion that it is unlikely he would be a successful president, if elected.

As a senator, Cruz preached much negativity and had few solutions, and his campaign for president is very similar. He has been against allowing undocumented immigrants into Texas as a senator, and he has stated that he would be against allowing them into the United States as president. In my mind, Senator Cruz spreads a message of hate. For instance, he has commented that Islam is a religion of hate and violence, which is clearly false. In addition, Senator Cruz has accomplished very little in Congress. He is known for his unwillingness to compromise with his fellow senators, too. Senator Cruz, I believe, is also very egotistical. It has been reported that Cruz, while attending Harvard Law School, made a study group in which he excluded people from "minor Ivies," such as the University of Pennsylvania and Brown University. This was an early example of Cruz's arrogance.

Members of Congress are not supposed to work against each other but work together and compromise, which is something that Senator Cruz is unwilling to do. This can be a positive trait for a president, but it can also have negative effects on a presidency. If a president is unwilling to listen to the advice of his Congress or cabinet members, then he may make an uneducated decision in a certain situation which could lead to a disaster. To be successful in any job, people must work with their colleagues, compromise, and determine ways to help the organization as a whole. In Senator Cruz's case, he refuses to work with his colleagues and does not compromise. He seems to constantly put his own gains before those of the nation and those of his colleagues. Cruz's uncooperative behavior and negative views will not only make him unlikely to be elected but also will make it extremely difficult for him to succeed if he is elected president.



Thomas Paul '17

### Potential Presidential Running Mates

While the current Republican primary may be one of the (if not the) most unpredictable in American history, the bid for who will be the G.O.P. candidate's running mate is practically over. Any plausible Republican candidate's choice for vice-president is quite clear: Nikki Haley (discounting Trump, who is hoping to run alongside Oprah Winfrey).

Haley, the Governor of South Carolina, first ascended into national politics when she ordered that the Confederate Battle Flag be removed from the South Carolina State Capitol Building in June 2015. Since then, she has been seen as a stalwart Republican figure. In fact, she delivered the response to the State of Union this year, which is a coveted honor for up-and-coming politicians. In 2013 and 2011, it was delivered by Senator Marco Rubio and Congressman Paul Ryan, respectively. Likewise, many current presidential hopefuls, including Senator Ted Cruz, have given

inadequate responses to recent State of Union speeches.

In her speech, Haley spoke out against the current political atmosphere of jingoistic xenophobia (also known as Presidential Candidate Donald J. Trump). She proved to be sharp and outgoing. Most importantly, she proved to be anti-Obama.



Haley also brings more to the political table. She is the youngest current U.S. Governor and may, therefore, work well with younger people in this race who want to represent a new era in American politics. Likewise, she is the daughter of Indian immigrants, so, if elected, she would be the first minority to hold the office of Vice President. However, her most important political asset is her gender; throughout her campaign, Former Secretary of State Hillary

Clinton has utilized her gender in order to cater to the female vote. Perhaps with a woman on the Republican ticket, the female vote would be split more evenly.

In this same way, it seems as though Clinton has also already decided upon her future running mate if she were to receive the Democratic nomination: Secretary of Housing and Urban Development and Former San Antonio Mayor, Julián Castro, a rising star in the Democratic Party. He delivered the D.N.C. Keynote address in 2012, a quadrennial speech that was contracted to then-state Senator Barack Obama in 2004. After being the youngest city councilman and mayor in San Antonio's history and the youngest mayor of one of the largest fifty cities in the United States at the time, he was brought to the White House to become Secretary of Housing and Urban Development in 2013, bringing him into the national spotlight.

Unfortunately, he has no political promise in his native state – Texas – which is a hard place for Democrats to hold office. (In the last gubernatorial vote, the Democrat lost by about 20 percent.) Therefore, it would

make sense for him to be given a high-up spot in Washington, such as Vice President, to ensure a future in politics for such a strong politician.



That is not to say that he does not deserve such a coveted job. San Antonio has a population of 1.4 million people, making it more populated than ten states. Castro was also well-loved by his citizens for his work strengthening Texas' education system, supporting LGBTQ+ rights, and helping to develop the state's economy.

Castro would also be a great asset to the Clinton campaign because he is everything Clinton is not. He's a young Latino from the Southwest who was raised in a struggling family by his single mother. Clinton is an older, white, female millionaire from New York. Therefore, Castro should be more able to reach out to average citizens than Clinton. This is especially true with the

Latino vote. Even if either Senators Cruz or Rubio are nominated, their histories with immigration as Cuban-Americans are much different than those of the majority of Latin Americans in the United States. Thanks to the “Wet Foot, Dry Foot” Policy, Cubans have a much easier time gaining amnesty than, say, Mexican-Americans like Castro. Mexican-Americans also make up a larger percent of the Latino community in the United States than any other ethnicity.

For Bernie Sanders, however, it will be more difficult to find a running mate. Castro has already formally endorsed Clinton (although he has said that he “would be fine” with a Sanders presidency), so he probably would not be able to get on the Sanders ticket.

This is actually an extremely common problem for Sanders; only two current congressmen and one current mayor (from New London, CT) are supporting Sanders. Not a single cabinet member, governor, or senator supports him. Conversely, more than half of Democratic governors and all but one woman in the Senate support Clinton.

This one woman, Elizabeth Warren, could be the perfect running mate for Sanders. Sanders on his own is surprisingly diverse (he would be the oldest and first non-Christian president). Yet, similar to the Republicans, it may not be that bad of an idea for him to have a female running mate. Warren is already a household name for most Democrats. She was a Harvard professor, specializing in bankruptcy law. (She actually taught Clinton on the subject.) After failing to become the Secretary of the CFPB, an agency that regulates Wall Street, because of misgivings about her liberalness in the Senate, she ran for office to be a senator of Massachusetts. As a senator, she has fought hard and earned the vote of both women’s rights groups and fiscal progressives.



Alex Capozziello '17

### **Being a Muslim in 21<sup>st</sup> Century America**

We live in a world dominated by fear. In an ideal world, the human race would live in harmony, in perfect unity with one another. However, in recent years there has been an increasing level of violence in our global society, prevalently witnessed in the form of terrorism. Terrorism is a true crime against humanity, but the greater injustice in our society is the negative, racist, bigoted treatment that Muslims receive for being the scapegoat of global terrorism.

Society has a tendency to search for a scapegoat, a group of people upon which we can assign blame in order to ease our anxiety, something that can be easily done to ethnic minority groups that society may not fully understand. In the case of terrorism, society has trended towards scapegoating the religion of Islam as a whole for the actions of terrorist groups such as ISIS (or ISIL). This fear and prejudice towards Muslims is known as Islamophobia, and it is especially present as a political force. In America, Muslims are often scapegoated as affiliates of ISIS and

other terrorist organizations; however, this belief is far from the truth. Muslims are generalized as having the same beliefs as extremists who tie their beliefs to the faith, despite having none of the same values as the religion itself. Islam is stereotyped and associated with the extremist values, which a small fraction claim to tie back to the Islamic faith, but the beliefs of extremists and those of most followers of Islam are, in fact, polar opposites. The Fiqh Council of North America has stated, "All acts of terrorism, including those targeting the life and property of civilians, whether perpetrated by suicidal or any other form of attacks, are haram (forbidden) in Islam." Extremists use violence as a means of achieving their goals, while the faith of Islam condemns the use of violence and, instead, promotes peace and unity amongst all peoples.

The public stigma and backlash against Muslims in America stems from the ignorance of other cultures that is present in American society. Unfortunately, the average American is not well-versed in world culture. There is a lack of proper cultural education in public school systems, which evidently leads

to misinformed youths going out into the world blind to religions and cultures other than their own. If the next generation is not educated in world culture, it will fail to remain open-minded and open to growth and will ultimately fear what they do not understand. In November, gun-wielding protesters gathered to protest the "Islamization of America" at a mosque in Irving, Texas. There is absolutely no reason for an incident such as this to occur. This rally to end the "Islamization of America" was solely a result of human ignorance and a lack of understanding of the Islamic faith. The Islamic faith condemns violence and promotes peace and equality of people from all faiths. If these protesters took the time to learn about the religion of Islam, they would realize that Muslims are not the masterminds behind global terrorism. Global terrorism only has an affiliation with one entity: evil.

Acts of terrorism, such as the ISIS beheadings of American journalists and the Charlie Hebdo attack, only add to the negative public stigma against Muslims. Muslims and Muslim leaders around the world condemn these attacks, as violence

goes against the Islamic belief; yet, politicians like Donald Trump respond to these terrorist threats by stating that Muslims should be required to carry special forms of identification and be registered in a database. Many members of the Republican Party have said that they believe that Islam clashes with traditional American values and see Islam as a threat. Political polemics and ignorant views against Muslims only worsen the stigma against the Muslim culture, giving more power to the Islamic scapegoat used to account for terrorism. To add to these increasingly vicious attacks against the Islamic faith, politicians are seen by Americans as positive role models. If our role models continue to view Muslims as terrorists, how can we hope that the next generation will understand that Muslims are not actually a threat to society?

All Muslims are not terrorists. The Islamic faith condemns the actions of terrorists groups like ISIS and their hateful ideologies. Islam is a religion of peace, which believes that its followers should be charitable and loving to all peoples. Just like dealing with any other religion, people must be

willing to investigate it and develop their own opinions before associating it with any positive or negative connotation. Muslims are our fellow Americans; therefore, it is our moral duty to protect them from being victims of stereotyping due to the public's lack of proper knowledge about their modest religion. We are not at war with Muslims. Rather, we are at war with a threat against all of humanity: global terrorism. In the words of President Barack Obama, "We cannot turn against one another by letting this fight be defined as a war between America and Islam. That, too, is what groups like ISIL want. ISIL does not speak for Islam. They are thugs and killers, part of a cult of death, and they account for a tiny fraction of more than a billion Muslims around the world, including millions of patriotic Muslim Americans who reject their hateful ideology."



Christopher Iannaccone '16

### Primaries and Caucuses 101

As we approach our next presidential election in November, we start to hear an increasing use of the words "primary" and "caucus" in the news. Many young voters know that these processes are important in choosing presidential candidates, but not everyone can successfully explain what they are. There are many questions, including "What is the difference between a primary and a caucus?" and "Why do some states have one process instead of the other?" and, finally, "Are these processes even allowed in the Constitution?" I plan to explain the importance of primaries and caucuses for those who may not know exactly what they are.

First, a primary is a process very similar to that of the nationwide elections. Voters from one of the two major parties cast their votes for their preferred candidates over a period of time. This is a common practice in most states which occurs between the months of February and June of the election year. However, the type of primary may

differ, depending on the state. Connecticut, for example, has a closed primary, in which only registered party members can vote for their parties. Other states, like Virginia, have open primaries where any registered voter can vote for any candidate in any party they want. A result of this open system is a practice called raiding, which is when voters in one party vote for the weakest candidate in another party's primary in order to give their own party an advantage. There may also be semi-open or semi-closed primaries, which have features of both open and closed primaries. In this election cycle, the first primary takes place on February 9 in New Hampshire.



A caucus is a public event at which registered voters and party members openly decide on their preferred candidates. This was the original method for choosing presidential candidates. Although, some argue that caucuses are less balanced than

primaries because the candidates with larger followings have more supporters turning out at the caucuses, thus increasing their chances for a nomination. The first caucus is on February 1 in Iowa.

Primaries and caucuses are two very different election processes. State parties may choose to pick one process over the other because of the financing from the state government. Additionally, many state governments are willing to pay for primary elections, which is why more states choose to hold primaries as opposed to caucuses.

Mark Sheffer '17

### A Brief History of Second Amendment Rights and the NRA

“A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.”

There is no debate about the exact wording of the Second Amendment, but the question of its intention, as with all laws, has

been hotly contested. For a hundred years or so, the Supreme Court and lower courts have agreed that the first “militia” clause took precedence over the “bear arms” clause, thus giving state militias the right to bear arms, but not explicitly giving individuals the right to own or carry weapons. This is clearly not the case today. In order to find the answer as to why this paradigm shift in the interpretation of the Second Amendment has taken place, we must look back at the turbulent history of the largest gun rights group in the United States.

The NRA was founded in 1871 by two northern Civil War veterans who felt that the war had dragged on for too long because urban northerners were not able to shoot as well as the rural southerners. Initially, its focus and motto was “Firearms Safety Education, Marksmanship Training, Shooting for Recreation.” Ambrose Burnside, heroic general of the Civil War and the association's first president, was committed to the vision of a well-armed and well-trained civilian-militia that could assist in domestic military matters similar to that of Shay's Rebellion, which took place in 1786.

For decades, the NRA was one of the nation's largest proponents of gun control. During the 1920s and '30s, NRA leaders helped to lobby and draft the first federal gun control laws and were instrumental in helping President Franklin D. Roosevelt draft the 1934 National Firearms Act and the 1938 Gun Control Act. Karl T. Frederick, who was the President of the NRA at the time, was once quoted as saying, “I have never believed in the general practice of carrying weapons. I seldom carry one... I do not believe in the general promiscuous toting of guns. I think it should be sharply restricted and only under licenses.” The National Revolver Association, the NRA's handgun counterpart, provided states with model legislation that included requiring a permit to carry a concealed weapon, adding five years to a prison sentence if a gun was used in a crime, and preventing all non-citizens from buying handguns.

This apparent legacy of gun moderation would be forever changed in 1977, when paranoid libertarians, who equated holding a gun with holding the torch of the Statue of Liberty, executed a coup

d'état at the NRA's annual meeting. Harlon Carter, the leader of the movement, and his coven of gun-toting political conservatives, part of the increasingly right-leaning Republican Party, gained control of the association and began an uphill effort to revise the national interpretation of the Second Amendment in order to give individuals, as opposed to just militias, the right to bear arms.



The NRA's revisionist perspective was not without its opponents. Former U.S Supreme Court Chief Justice Warren Burger, a conservative through and through, called it "one of the greatest pieces of fraud – I repeat the word 'fraud' – on the American public by special interest groups that I have ever seen in my lifetime." Still, the NRA trucked on, pouring vast amounts of money into Congressional campaigns and commissioning academic studies to provide

an intellectual backbone to the individual rights theory. The 1980 election of Ronald Reagan brought an outspoken gun-enthusiast into the White House, the final nail in the coffin of the old Second Amendment perspective.

This whole issue brings up an interesting point. Conservatives in America often mock the liberal view of a flexible or "living" Constitution that adapts to the values of the majority in the present. However, there is no clearer incident of the "living" Constitution than in the conservative reinterpretation of the Second Amendment. It now seems that, from our earliest lessons on the Constitution, we are taught that each individual United States citizen has the right, nay, the duty, to own and carry a firearm and that it has been this way since the Constitution's ratification in 1787. It just goes to show that laws aren't as concrete as people seem to think. They are often left up to the interpretation of men and women of different times and perspectives. The least we can do is know how these interpretations have changed over the course of our history and how they affect our nation as a whole.

Michael Brennan '17

### **The Evolving Role of Women in Combat**

The United States Military recently announced that it will allow female soldiers to have all combat-related jobs. Under pressure and disregarding advice from the Marine Corps, President Obama and his administration overruled a proposed bill and stated that if women can pass the tests, then they should be allowed to be in the field. Many people are concerned that because the female body is generally not as fit or strong as that of the male, the standards for the physical test will be lowered to accommodate these factors.

My cousin, Daniel, a Marine Captain, has told me some of his thoughts on allowing women in combat jobs. He was concerned that male soldiers would feel a sense of needing to protect their fellow female soldiers. He also said that this could cause male soldiers to interpret orders unclearly and, instead, protect the female soldiers in their unit. However, he went on to say that "it's not just women I don't want to

see in combat, but also 99 percent of the others I have served with."

Conversely, having women in combat exhibits a growth as a country which is no longer on centered around men. Many advocates for women's rights and, in particular, women's involvement in combat situations believe that excluding the opposite sex from serving in combat positions is often done because of the belief that they "are not as good as men." With this change, the U.S. Military will not be loosening any standards for women; therefore, the majority of the American population does not view this as a problem. In addition, women have proved throughout history that they are, in most cases, just as capable as men.

This topic has become extremely controversial because women do not want to feel like they need to be protected, and they do not wish to be seen as weak. However, male officers are concerned with how men in both officer and infantry positions would react and how the "daily life" could be changed. I would even say we could compare this to our lives here at Prep. With women in the mix, I feel that the brotherhood that this

school makes would be weakened. Now with women in combat, we will have to wait and see the outcome and repercussions.



Damian Chessare '17

### **Common Ground: Making Government Work Again**

Once admirably dubbed the “world’s most deliberative body,” the U.S. Senate is now a breeding ground for partisanship and inefficiency – having grown into a dysfunctional and embarrassing shadow of its former bipartisan self as it has seemingly forgotten good governance. The senate's dysfunction is not specific to the previously prestigious chamber of the states; it represents a blatant case of short sighted, damaging, and crippling partisanship that has plagued the United States government

for more than a decade. Partisan gridlock has cast a serious shadow over the future of our country, and it has created innumerable problems for our generation to solve – as the current Congress has been able to achieve little except “kicking the can down the road.”

It is imperative to the future of our (now less) great nation to cleanse its government of blind partisanship and unbending ideology and to once again embrace the ideals upon which our government was founded: common sense, pragmatism, compromise, and bipartisanship. Since the 2008 election, hyper-partisanship has become increasingly rampant as both parties have adopted one dimensional ideologies and “my way or the highway” attitudes. We are in desperate need of reform – so desperate that the well-being and futures of the United States, our government, and future generations depend on it.

The United States Congress does not need to be stripped of its past procedures and traditions with new reforms and policies; rather, it must be returned to the state of which it was intended to exist. Congress must

be restored to how it has operated for decades before now, to what it once was, and to what it can be again. For over two centuries, the Senate and House of Representatives actually faced problems, solved issues, and legislated solutions through the practice of compromise, bipartisanship, and statesmanship. The legislative branch was created to work under these practices. The reason why the house and senate are dysfunctional is because they are simply not operating the way they were intended. In order to work again, Congress must be reformed with new practices and procedures that were commonplace not too long ago.

The number one source of hyper-partisanship is the current leadership on both sides of the aisle. Regrettably, our government is led by weak leaders who are too ideological, uncompromising, and shortsighted to do their duties to the American people. President Obama is an ideologue whose refusal to compromise and seek a third way has hurt this nation. Rigidly following one's beliefs is extremely impractical when government requires consensus. Additionally, compromise is

essential to creating solutions, and refusal to meet opposing views halfway has led to a legislatively fruitless presidency. Former Speaker of the House and current Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) is infamous for her contempt for opposing views, consistently refusing to compromise on issues such as health care, budgetary spending, and open discussion. Conversely, Congressional Republicans under the mantle of the Tea Party and similarly weak leadership have effectively killed far too many opportunities for statesmanship as they have rampantly adhered to their far-right beliefs. Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) refused to allow Republican amendments to the floor for a vote when he was the Majority Leader, yet his successor, Mitch McConnell (R-KY), has repeated this cycle of injury and error. In the upcoming 2016 election, it is imperative to elect leaders who are committed to compromise and bipartisanship – leaders that understand there is no such thing as a perfect bill and that a leader works with the opposition to find common ground.

Procedures on which Congress have run for decades must be reinstated and

brought back into common practice in order to promote bipartisan functionality and efficiency. The floors of both the house and senate are designed to entertain introduced bills for a vote no matter who proposes them. Congressional procedure and practice allow legislators to add amendments to bills being considered. However, this open amendment process has been corrupted by party politics. In recent years, Harry Reid, Mitch McConnell, Nancy Pelosi, and Former Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) have blocked amendments and bills by the opposing party from even being considered for a vote on the floor. This unethical practice is a direct violation of democracy, as it creates an inequality of citizens. Since legislators are elected to represent their constituents, blocking the bill of a legislator is blocking the ability of a group of citizens to participate in government and exercise their political voices. Furthermore, a closed bill process induces gridlock and cheap politics and inhibits congress' ability to formulate real solutions.

Secondly, in regards to procedure, the powerful role of the congressional committee

must be restored. Under past procedure, introduced bills are referred to the committee of the topic they address. The committee then votes on whether the measure should proceed to the floor for a vote. Currently, the vast majority of bills are not even considered by the committee due to the lack of emphasis on the committee process. In total, committees must be reemphasized and should reassume their vital roles in the democratic proceedings of congress.

Finally, in procedure, the reinstitution of a five or four day workweek is essential to the operation of Congress. Presently, the Capitol workweek starts on Tuesday and ends on Thursday, offering very little time for any work to truly get done. Congress must be held accountable to the same working standards that we require of the average American worker. Legislators have a job to do, and they need time to do it. Furthermore, congress should not be allowed to leave town on recess without a budget in place or with other pressing matters overhead. This attitude of procrastination has led to inefficiency and a dismal record of results.

The hyper-partisanship is the regrettable result of one-dimensional shifts of both the Democratic and Republican Parties. In modern politics, there is little room for moderates and independent thinkers within the two major parties. Ronald Reagan once advocated a “big tent” philosophy for the Republican Party – allowing the party to consist of centrists, moderates, conservatives, and anything in between. The Southern Democrat was known to be conservative on many social issues, and the Blue Dog Democrat was famous for his centrism and love of the third way. Now, the Republican Party has given in to bashfully uncompromising far-right conservatives such as Sen. Ted Cruz (R-TX) and the Tea Party, and the Democratic Party has blindly followed far-left progressives such as Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-CA) and Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT). Moderates such as Joe Manchin (D-WV) and Susan Collins (R-ME) carry the overload of finding common ground on solutions, while the rest of the chamber frivolously yell back and forth.

Congress’ lack of compromise, respect for procedure, strong leaders, and

practical moderates is also largely the result of money in political elections. Campaign finance reform is imperative for the longevity and survival of American democracy. Without it, the United States can no longer be the republic that the founders envisioned but, instead, a gross plutocracy controlled by the rich, robbing the people of their voices and liberties. Money must be controlled in political elections, or else we risk the downfall of the American republic and way of life. Without regulation, elections are neither free nor democratic and are not controlled by the will of the people. The overturning of the *Citizens United* decision – a Supreme Court case that determined money to be an exercise of free speech – is essential to the expulsion of money in politics. As our nation looks to elect new leaders this year, we must be looking to support those who advocate democracy, not the intrusion of corporate, trade union, or Wall Street influences into American elections.

The greatest country on Earth should be governed like it is the greatest country on Earth. It is not whether an idea is liberal or conservative, but whether the idea works or

does not work – whether it tackles the problem or not. There is no such thing as a perfect solution, and in order for effective legislation to pass, lawmakers must put aside ideological differences and find common ground in the best interest of the American people. Only through bipartisanship and compromise can congress truly move the country forward and enact meaningful reform. Through returning congress to how it was intended to operate, respecting political diversity, and maintaining fair elections through campaign finance reform and fair congressional districts, our government can be cured of its partisan gridlock and unwillingness to compromise.



Ryan Dunn '17

### **Troubled Waters: An Iranian Incident**

On January 12, the Iranian Navy detained two United States naval vessels, capturing ten U.S. Navy personnel. U.S. Secretary of Defense Ash Carter released a statement stating that our Navy unintentionally wandered into the waters of the Persian Gulf because of "a navigational error of some kind." However, the Iranian Navy did not think that this was the case and believed that the U.S. Navy was committing espionage or insinuating a possible act of aggression. The ten sailors on board were held in Iran for about a day before being released. Soon after this incident, a video surfaced which involved Iranian sailors pointing guns at the American sailors, who had their hands up and were on their knees, not indicating any kind of aggression. The Iranian media also released videos of some of the sailors being held captive and being interviewed. A male sailor, who was clearly uncomfortable, nervous, and fearing for his life, called the Iranian officials "fantastic" and "excellent" – a clear sign of pressure from the

officials. Likewise, the one female American sailor was seen in the video with her face covered, according to Islamic law, even though she showed no signs of being Muslim in the video with Iranian officials pointing guns at the American sailors.



threat to our nation and to the safety of other nations. Hopefully, our next President will be able to pacify the beast formally known as Persia: Iran.

In late January, the Supreme Leader of Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, awarded the Iranian officials who captured the U.S vessels with medals. This awarding of medals may signify a worsening in the already rocky relationship between Iran and the United States. Additionally, one of the "highlights" of President Obama's second term has been his recent nuclear agreement with Iran. Although, the unnecessary aggression Iran has displayed in handling this naval incident suggests that they really took nothing away from these agreements, in a diplomatic sense. Iran, being a nuclear capable nation, is still a

# Fairfield Prep 2016 Presidential Poll Results

	Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior	Total
<b>DEMOCRATS</b>					
Clinton	3	1	1	1	6
Sanders	8	15	11	6	40
<b>REPUBLICANS</b>					
Trump	37	18	11	23	89
Cruz	1	3	0	1	5
Rubio	8	3	3	9	23
Bush	4	2	3	0	9
Carson	1	2	1	1	5
Kasich	0	0	1	0	1
Fiorina	2	1	1	0	4
Christie	3	4	3	0	10
	67	49	35	41	192