

To: Senator Kamala Harris

From: Indivisible East Bay

Date: May 10, 2017

Re: Answers to our video questions; protecting the ACA; continuing ICE raids; Russia investigations; EPA chaos; private prisons and the “revolving door”

Dear Senator Harris, Daniel Chen, and SF staff,

Thank you again for taking the time to talk with us from Indivisible East Bay. With the passage in the House of the AHCA last week, the urgency for resistance to the GOP agenda is higher than ever. As the Senator knows, people’s lives are quite literally at stake.

But before we dive into those concerns, we would like to express our thanks for many of the positive actions that Senator Harris has taken recently, including:

- Introducing the Agricultural Worker Program Act, which would provide protections for migrant farmworkers
- Demanding EPA Chief Scott Pruitt address his conflicts of interest regarding ozone regulations
- Speaking out so vocally against the president’s proposed border wall
- Speaking out against Julie Kirchner as the Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman

April Town Hall: Thank you for beginning the practice of holding town halls during Congressional recesses, which we see as a necessary part of accountability to your constituents. As you know, IEB hosted a watching party of the live-stream. The technological failures illustrate why more in-person appearances are necessary. In addition, we submitted a video with many questions that your East Bay constituents have for you, and we know those were passed along by Daniel Chen. We’d like to receive a response to these questions, even if it’s in written form.

Questions:

- Does Senator Harris plan to hold her next town hall during the May or July State Work Periods?
- When can we expect a response to our questions from the first town hall?

Defending the ACA: Defending the ACA and blocking the passage of the GOP’s disastrous AHCA is a matter of life and death for many of your constituents. Thank you for speaking out against Congressman Labrador’s absurd claim that nobody dies because of lack of access to health care (to which dropping an f-bomb seems a wholly appropriate response). The absence of women from the team of GOP senators drafting a new proposal is wrong and dangerous. Please keep speaking out against any form of the GOP bill; use the filibuster if budget reconciliation fails.

We are gratified to hear loud choruses of Americans showing up at town halls with GOP representatives who voted for this travesty, calling them to account. Anticipating this backlash, many reps are simply not holding town halls. This is an opportunity: we suggest that you take a powerful stand and hold public forums on health care those districts, in particular CA-10, held by Republican Jeff Denham. We would guarantee a huge turnout, which would send a powerful message to politicians across America that standing by this deeply unpopular legislation will cost them their seats.

Questions:

- How do you see the health care fight playing out in the Senate? Will the GOP be able to use filibuster-proof reconciliation to pass legislation? What are you doing to stop it?
- Will you consider holding healthcare forums in CA districts of GOP Representatives who voted for the House bill?
- What can IEB do to support your fight against the ACA’s repeal?

Continuing ICE raids: A recent *Washington Post* study found that half of all ICE detainees since the inauguration have no record or only minor traffic violations. Still these raids continue, with no priorities set on who should be targeted. These policies are racist and make our communities less safe. We know that rights and fair treatment for immigrants is a top priority for Senator Harris. We encourage the senator to keep leveraging her seat on the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee to demand a more sane policy and justice for immigrants in our communities.

Questions:

- How can Senator Harris leverage the oversight responsibilities of the HSGA Committee to protect immigrants?
- Has ICE increased its transparency in reporting its activities to the committee?

Russia Investigations: Recent news reports have indicated that Senate leadership has not given enough resources to the Senate Intelligence Committee to adequately do its investigation into Russian meddling in the presidential election in a timely manner. While pressure for more resources from within the committee might move things a bit, we believe that increased public pressure and shaming could move Senate leadership even more. We recognize that there are many details about the investigation that the senator cannot share, but we ask Senator Harris to alert her constituents if she feels that the GOP is trying to block progress on this investigation. We would be there to vocally demand the needed resources.

Questions:

- Does the senator feel that enough resources are going to the investigation?
- Can the senator disclose anything more about the progress of the investigation?

EPA advisory board dismissals, Paris Accord: We were troubled to learn that Scott Pruitt has dismissed half of the science advisers on boards convened to advise the EPA on policy. This action, in the context of Pruitt's ongoing war on science, suggests that Pruitt seeks to stack those boards with allies who will offer the kind of advice Pruitt wants to hear, no matter the consensus of scientists. Meanwhile, Trump continues to consider withdrawal from the Paris Accords. These actions threaten not only Americans, but the progress on climate that the whole world has made in the past several years. We hope that Senator Harris, in her work with the Committee on the Environment and Public Works, opposes these measures in every way she can.

Questions:

- What is the senator doing to oppose Pruitt's war on science?
- What strategies is the senator using to influence the decision on the Paris Accord?

Private prison revolving door: Daniel Ragsdale, second-in-command at ICE, has announced he's leaving his post to take an undisclosed job with GEO Group, a private prison company. This sort of revolving door between the public and private sectors, particularly in the justice system, is extremely dangerous; it is also just the sort of "swamp" activity that the president railed against as a candidate and has only intensified since the inauguration. We ask Senator Harris to keep speaking out against the dangers of private prisons in the criminal justice system.

Questions:

- What is the senator doing to curtail the influence of financial interest in the criminal justice system?

Thank you for your time. Please contact IEB's team coordinator Christopher White (cwardwhite@gmail.com; 415-341-7838) with any additional questions or comments.

Thank you for your time and attention,
Indivisible East Bay