

Update

Fall 2020

Ron Zucker, Editor

Local

October 18 Meeting

Spencer Sunshine on The U.S. Far Right and the Looming Elections

The 2016 Presidential election brought a shudder to much of the nation as Donald Trump's racist leanings arrived in the White House and at the top end of the Federal Government. But a particular sector of the U.S. population, the Far Right, welcomed the result with open arms and an increased effort to become part of the fabric of our country's society. In the past few years this brand of people has emerged from the shadows to gain more visibility, if not any more legitimacy (beyond their own take).

As the 2020 elections approach, this question (among others) looms large: Is the U.S. really rushing headlong into fascism and civil war, as many fear? That depends on your perspective.

Spencer Sunshine, PhD, a New York-based researcher of Far Right movements, will join us to offer his perspective on Sunday, October 18. Spencer will talk about the history of the Far Right in the U.S., its rise over the last decade, and the spread of its grassroots forces under the Trump administration.

What is the interplay between Donald Trump and the fascist-leaning, potentially violent wing of his base: Proud Boys, militias and neo-Nazis? Where are we headed next? And most important, what kinds of practical actions can we take now, as well as prepare for in the future?

The October 18 meeting will begin at 7 PM on the Zoom platform. To request an invitation (and to become part of our email listserve), email smpa@sanmateopeaceaction.org.

Since 2005, Spencer Sunshine has written extensively about the U.S. Far Right. His topics include postwar fascism, the Patriot/militia movement, left-right crossover movements, and antisemitic currents on both the Left and Right. His articles have been published in Truthout, Colorlines, The Forward, and Public Eye; his academic work has appeared in places like the Journal of Peasant Studies.

Spencer was present at the armed takeover of Oregon's Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in January 2016. In August 2017 he was part of the counter-demonstration

against the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, and was in the crowd during the car attack which killed Heather Heyer and injured about 30 others.

We hope you'll be on hand for what looks to be an incisive presentation from an experienced activist and writer unafraid to stand up to the Far Right.

Summary of July 26 Virtual Meeting

"Suppressed" lays out 2018 issues, 2020 Challenge for Elections

Viewers who gathered on PASMOC'S Zoom platform to watch the documentary film "Suppressed – The Fight to Vote" saw a "case study", as the film labeled it in a recently-updated version (now called "Suppressed – 2020"), of systematic voter suppression. The documentary film dealt chiefly with the 2018 Georgia gubernatorial election. Mixing personal stories with telling statistics, the process described in the film targeted, in a variety of ways, mostly people of color but generally voters unlikely to vote Republican.

The film begins with the 2013 Supreme Court decision to strip certain provisions from the 1965 Voting Rights Act. In its modified form, the Act allowed for more racially discriminatory voting laws, under a hard-to-fathom premise that the provisions had worked and were therefore no longer needed. Names of state after state flashed on the screen along with laws each soon enacted calling for voter ID requirements as well as registration and absentee ballot-related provisions. The result was "rampant" voter purges.

The focus of "Suppressed" shifts to Georgia, where Republican gubernatorial candidate Brian Kemp – also Georgia's Secretary of State – is running against Black Democratic candidate Stacy Abrams. The film shows a robust voter registration drive on Abrams' and Democrats' behalf, but the voting process is subject to actions by Kemp in his official authority. One activist calls such actions generally "very bureaucratic, very mundane, very routine, but it is lethal." Registration itself is one example, in which Kemp was under no mandated timeline to process registration forms, and put over 53,000 registrations – 80% people of color – on hold until after the election. A longtime voter who had recently moved and re-registered describes in amazement being told her name was not on the 2018 voter rolls.

The film deals with polling places, specifically a rampant shutdown, beginning in 2016. One elderly voter describes needing to travel 30 miles to his precinct, in a

town with a 95% – and a county with 62% – Black population. The local County Board of Elections cites the expense of keeping polling places open, but the cost compared to yearly Christmas decorations is miniscule. While the Board eventually votes to reopen many of the precincts, it “threw the spotlight” on the fact that since 2012, 214 others had been closed – 75% of them in majority-Black counties. A study cites that a precinct removal of 4 miles translates into a 20% drop in Black voter turnout.

Voter purges were the next subject: Kemp’s reputation for the practice is illustrated by the report that he purged over a half-million in one night in 2017, still a fraction of the 890,000 removed since 2013. Purge notices declaring a voter’s “inactive status” (which can’t be reversed for that election) cite such reasons such a voter no longer resides in a municipality (not always true), and hasn’t voted in the last few elections. The purge rate for Democratic-majority counties is cited as four times that of Republican-majority counties. One voting-rights activist notes a paradox of Kemp as a candidate with “his hands on the levers”, comparing him to “an umpire who is also playing in the game.”

“Suppressed” then cuts to within 20 days of Election Day 2018, and a very close Gubernatorial race. There are stories of frustration from voters waiting for their absentee ballots: A war veteran who voted twice while in Iraq but received his ballot much too late while stationed in South Carolina; and a young woman who had moved to Washington, DC and never received the ballot she requested far in advance. A Facebook post she sent out received 40 replies reporting a similar experience. Out of over 281,000 absentee ballot requests, tens of thousands failed to arrive in time for Election Day.

As for the day itself, long lines and waits of up to 5 hours marked polling places in Black communities. Voters recalled being told their names were not on the rolls; one woman is told to go to the County Registrar, where she was told to return to her polling place and cast a “provisional ballot” – which later in the film is termed a “placebo”, meant “to shut them up...make them go away.” (This voter in fact called the Registrar after Election Day to find out hers had not been counted.) Calls to the Secretary of State’s office were often hung up on or placed on hold. Voter protection hotlines received 84,000 calls. Meanwhile, there were clips of polling places in predominantly white neighborhoods with plenty of available voting machines, virtually no lines, and voters reporting an easy process.

Georgia’s “exact match” law became an issue, in which a voter’s registration name must match their ID. The film reported studies that Latinx and Asian voters were 6 times more likely to be victims of this law than white voters, while Blacks were 8 times more likely. Students

of color also tell stories of being turned away at polls – told they weren’t registered where they lived (or at all), or even not citizens. Each person interviewed insisted what they were told simply wasn’t the case.

A Georgia computer science academic puts it succinctly: “If you have a fixed resource, an easy way to suppress the vote is to just make the resource unavailable to the people you don’t want to vote.” A Black pastor notes that with some people who couldn’t wait for hours to vote leaving before voting, “A little walking away in 159 Georgia counties can change a close race.” Kemp’s brief “victory speech” contrasts with Abrams’ speech in which she ends her campaign, but calls out as “appalling” the role of suppression in the election. “This is not a speech of concession”, she concludes.

The updated 2020 version of the film generally cites a “coordinated effort to suppress, using lawyers, millions of dollars,” and of course the coronavirus. Wisconsin is forced by the Supreme Court to hold its April primary as scheduled, with just 5 polling sites open in Milwaukee instead of the usual 180. Kentucky reduces its number of polling sites from 3,700 to 200. Donald Trump is shown criticizing mail-in voting (“...you’d never have a Republican elected in this country again.”)

The film ends on a positive note, citing states that have recently passed new laws to restore voter rights, institute automatic registration and early voting, and expand mail-in and absentee voting. Anyone watching “Suppressed 2020” should be convinced there is much more to do.

Ron Zucker

www.fighttovote.com

Following the screening, we “screen-shared” a list of resources to help get out the vote. A few of these are below.

Vote Forward: An initiative to write letters to historically infrequent voters in a number of states, saying why you vote and encouraging them to vote. Download and print the letters with names and addresses on a template that you fill in, then address, stamp and send the letters a week before November 3. Or you can have printed letters delivered to you (also sign up to deliver letters).

www.votefwd.org

Reclaim our Vote: Associated with the Center for Common Ground, this is a “virtual phonebank” in association with the NAACP that reaches out to voters of color to help them register as well as know where and when to vote both early and on election day. This is not an “auto-dialer”; you dial yourself and go at your own pace. There is a weekly meeting, also on Tuesdays, to cover what state and county is being called, but here again it’s up to you when to log on and make calls.

There are also efforts to write letters or postcards.

www.centerforcommonground.org

Fair Fight: Stacy Abrams initiated this site for getting people active in promoting fair voting, either virtually or in areas around the country (often neighboring states) where suppression is a potential problem this year. Sign up with your zip code and you will be contacted about ways you can help. www.fairfight.com

Be a Pollworker this November: A shortage of pollworkers could affect how polling places function, and more help will surely be needed in order for things to go smoothly on election day. You can also be paid a small stipend. www.powerthepolls.org

212-224-3121: The U.S. Capitol switchboard, so you can remind our Senators and Representatives to insist on adequate funding for the United States Postal Service, and encourage vote-by-mail, toward a full and fair turnout.

PASMC Officers and Board

As part of the July meeting, PASMC had its annual election for members in attendance to elect the coming year's slate of Officers and Board members. The slate is as follows:

President: Mike Caggiano

Vice President: Cheryl Kozanitas

Secretary: Mary Beavins

At large Board members:

Max Bollock, Laura Hinze, Gary Parma, Bill Wolfe, Ron Zucker

Membership Report

PASMC thanks and welcomes back the following renewing members:

Tom Banks, Tara Bass, Mary Beavins, Max Bollock, Daniel Gilbrech, Vany Laurenti, Alan Mattlage, Gloria and Jim Purcell, Stephen and Joanne Rovno, Judy Starling, Edna Steele, Keldyn West and Marty Springer

Summary of September 13 Virtual Meeting

The Rise and Fall of U.S./China Relations

Longtime South Bay activist Dr. Sharat Lin had a variety of perspectives with which to view what he called an “unraveling” of relations between the U.S. and China. Sharat has gotten a first-hand look at life in China, and he has observed from here the heavy-handed wielding of U.S. economic power by Donald Trump, against China and the rest of the world. He shared his thoughts about the causes and possible effects of the differences between the two countries.

While both have enormous purchasing power, said Sharat, they diverge in what they offer: The U.S. imports a great deal more goods from China, causing a trade deficit of \$345 billion. We do have a slight surplus in services and remittances in the financial sector, but the trade imbalance seemed at the top of Trump's mind when he began to level tariffs against China in 2018. When the favor was returned, the trade war was on and the volume of trade decreased. The stock market on each side of the ocean initially reacted differently, with a steep decline in China but less so here where companies hoped to benefit from the decrease in Chinese competition. The adverse effect of U.S. companies suddenly unable to export to China caused a mixed result on Wall Street.

Sharat drew contrasts between the two countries' infrastructure. He noted China's advances in anti-poverty programs as well as in high-speed rail, electric cars and renewable energy – which the U.S. buys from China while Trump concentrates on fossil fuel production. (Sharat acknowledged China still leads the world in coal production, thus is “not the angel” in that regard). More recently the COVID-19 pandemic was met with a lockdown and travel restrictions in China, while Trump had no such response – in fact choosing to blame China for its origin. (Sharat noted that the virus mostly came to our shores from Italy.)

He cited other technological advances in China: the digital currency Electronic Random Base (ERMB), the first of its kind backed by a country's central bank, and its faster 5G cellular network introduced by the tech company Huawei. This more advanced and less expensive system challenges U.S. dominance and has contributed further to the trade war, said Sharat, with the U.S. trying to coerce other countries to remove Huawei equipment.

Sharat addressed the issue of sanctions, which he said occur for various reasons, such as a failure to accept capitalist rules, alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction, or alleged human rights violations. (While the U.S. releases a “human rights report” every year, Sharat noted a double standard as evidenced by the ignoring of Saudi Arabia's violations.) “The U.S. is the leading sanctioner”, he said, citing its role as a global superpower with by far the largest military.

With the largest economy, the U.S. also exerts jurisdiction over financial transactions, intellectual property and political power. We also can influence such world bodies as the UN, World Bank and NATO. While economic sanctions have impact on small economies such as Cuba, North Korea and Iran, with relation to China the economic effect is also felt here. And while the U.S. dollar represents over 60% of world currency reserve – keeping it the preferred currency for most financial transactions – the sanctions regimes, said Sharat, are forcing countries

more toward the Euro and the ERMB. The dollar, he added, has also been affected by the pandemic, because of our lack of action compared to China's lockdowns that have helped it get back to something like normal.

Sharat turned to what he called the impression of China as an authoritarian country, short on human rights. He noted a comparison to fully armed U.S. police with pictures of Chinese police in groups, some with guns, some without. In the restive and autonomous Xinjiang province, populated by (among many other Muslim populations) Uighurs striving for independence, he acknowledged the government's "heavy hand". But when he took a trip to the region he found no evidence of the genocide which has been alleged. Bilingual public signs, improved sanitation practices and a fair degree of Muslim culture were all visible. He did acknowledge Chinese programs to re-educate people and discourage religion (and there are recent reports of moving populations to villages to modernize cultures, as well as to detention sites where re-education is a practice). He also noted evidence of incarceration of about 200,000 Uighurs – a large number, but a far cry from what he called exaggerated reports of 1-2 million.

Sharat speculated on the respective personalities of Trump and Xi, wondering if Trump's trade war might have more to do with just exerting brute force ("because he is who he is?"). It seems that a big concern on Xi's part is consolidating control over the Chinese people and controlling his own image. Meanwhile, the closing of consulates in both countries, as well as Trump's efforts to block Chinese platforms WeChat and TikTok (the fate of the latter's recently averted in a deal with American companies) may have elevated a trade war to a "diplomatic war", with each country's ideology and nationalism on display.

Sharat termed the economic tussle "globalism in retreat", in a situation that could come to involve Europe and other countries and economies. In the two countries' banking sectors, an "economic decoupling" could lead to the rest of the world choosing sides and the dollar becoming further less of the world's reserve currency. Meanwhile, in what he called an "emerging superpower rivalry", both countries are testing more weapons and the U.S. is conducting military exercises near China, a typically asymmetric event. The combination of events point to a new cold war, he said, adding it is "up to activists to do everything we can to stop...from happening."

Ron Zucker

If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we should find in each man's life sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

National

Brady Campaign Condemns Lack of Action in the Investigation into Breonna Taylor's Killing

Following the murder of Breonna Taylor, we called for justice and full accountability in the investigation of her death. Yet this week, the Grand Jury responsible for reviewing her case did just the opposite. The charges announced are for shots fired into neighboring apartments, not those that killed Breonna in her own bed.

We must be clear: this is not what accountability looks like. Failing to hold anyone accountable for the senseless murder of Breonna Taylor suggests her life does not matter. But we know it does. She was a daughter, a sister, a mentor, and so much more. We will not allow this terrible decision to be the final chapter in this fight for justice.

We have marched for months, calling for all officers who are responsible for Breonna Taylor's murder to be held to account. The Grand Jury's decision today has not done so at all, and that is unacceptable. The violence against Breonna Taylor and the violence against Black communities at the hands of police is not an accident. We need systemic and structural change to stop the killings of Black people – especially Black women such as Breonna Taylor. This decision only underscores how much more work needs to be done and how broad that change must be. It is a slap in the face that apartment walls can receive more justice than the life of a Black woman.

Brady United Against Gun Violence

www.bradyyunited.org

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It Can Happen Here

It can't happen here? Only in banana republics? Well, saddle up your favorite search engine and type in "1933 coup attempt Smedley Butler" and see the YouTube segments that pop up. Then type in "McCormack-Dickstein coup committee hearings 1934" and sit back and learn something you never heard about in high school or even university.

Yes it did happen here, and luckily was ratted out by Marine General Smedley Butler, who was approached to lead it. The hearings were magically terminated just when they were getting to the top conspirators, the Dupont Family and the J.P. Morgans of the land. So don't be too smug that it can't happen here, friends.

Mike Caggiano

For an interesting article called "10 Things you Need to Know to Stop a Coup", go to www.wagingnonviolence.org.

International

What you need to know Israel's agreements with UAE and Bahrain

The deals will further militarize the region and undermine prospects for peace.

By Mike Merryman-Lotze, September 17

On (September 15), President Donald Trump hosted Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the foreign ministers of the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain at the White House, where the guests signed agreements normalizing their diplomatic relations. The ceremony followed recent announcements by the U.S. that it had helped facilitate separate diplomatic agreements between Israel and the UAE and Israel and Bahrain.

While Trump and others have lauded the agreements as "peace" deals, the Israel-UAE and Israel-Bahrain accords should concern all seeking justice and sustainable peace in the region. Rather than building toward peace, these agreements will further militarize the region – while doing nothing to end ongoing gross human rights violations perpetrated by Israel, the UAE, and Bahrain.

Here's what you should know:

1. The agreements do not end war, conflicts, or occupation.

While the establishment of diplomatic relations between Israel and the UAE as well as Israel and Bahrain signal a change in relationship, it's important to remember that none of the states have ever been at war with each other. The absence of diplomatic relations prior to these agreements was not linked to open hostilities among these countries.

The establishment of diplomatic relations between countries that were never at war does not, by itself, constitute

a step towards peace, unless these agreements contribute to the end of violence, occupation, militarization, and human rights abuses. These agreements do none of these things. Israel continues its illegal occupation of Palestinian territory and denial of Palestinian rights. The UAE and Bahrain continue their involvement in the war in Yemen – as well as human rights abuses within their own countries.

2. The agreements fail to improve conditions for Palestinians – and may make it more difficult to realize a just and sustainable peace.

When announcing its agreement with Israel, the UAE requested a commitment from Israel not to annex portions of the West Bank. However, Netanyahu has clearly stated that annexation is not off the table and will move forward at a future date.

For Palestinians, these agreements bring no change – and the oppression and violence that they live with under Israel's occupation will continue. What's more, these agreements undermine the Arab Peace Initiative, viewed by many Palestinians as outlining the minimum requirements to realize a negotiated two-state deal.

3. These agreements undermine efforts to end the war in Yemen.

In recent years, a broad bipartisan coalition has come together to end the war in Yemen. One of its key demands is that the U.S. stop supporting the Saudi-UAE-Bahrain coalition helping to fuel the war. War crimes perpetrated by UAE and Bahraini militaries have been well-documented by the U.N. and human rights organizations in Yemen, including forced disappearances, assassinations, torture, and the bombing of protected civilian infrastructure.

Israel's agreements with UAE and Bahrain have also reset relations between the two countries and the U.S. That allows the U.S. to offer new weapons sales and military relationships that were not previously possible to the UAE and Bahrain, supporting their ongoing roles in one of the world's worst current humanitarian catastrophes.

4. By opening the door to new arms sales and political alliances, these agreements further militarize the Middle East.

Before the agreements, the U.S. commitment to ensure that Israel maintains a "qualitative military edge" over adversary states limited the U.S. from selling weapons to the UAE and Bahrain. Now that Israel has established diplomatic relationships with the two countries, those limits on arms sales can be waived, expanding the arms market for U.S. companies. In fact, soon after the agreement between Israel and the UAE was announced, the Trump administration announced it would sell F-35 warplanes to the UAE.

Additionally, prior to this agreement, a significant number of Israeli companies were doing business in the UAE. Israel Aerospace Industries and Elbit Systems maintained the UAE's F-16 fighter jets and sold the government other military equipment. Logic Systems provided security support in the country. The NSO Group – with support from the Israeli government—sold the UAE, Bahrain, and other Gulf States spyware systems to break into phones and spy on their owners. We can expect to see to expanded military cooperation and arms sales between these countries as well.

Arms manufacturers and others who profit from militarization and war will directly benefit – at the expense of individuals suffering from human rights abuses, occupation, and war.

5. The agreements strengthen anti-Iranian cooperation in the Middle East, risking increased tension in the region.

The U.S. and Israel's tense relations with Iran are well known. Over the past several years, U.S. sanctions on Iran and Israeli military actions against Iranian targets have increased the risk of open conflict. At the same time, there are also growing regional divides between Iran and its allies on one side and Saudi Arabia and its allies (including the UAE and Bahrain) on the other side. The recent Saudi announcement that it would allow Israel to use its airspace following the UAE agreement signals Saudi Arabia's tacit consent to these changes.

The UAE/Bahrain/Israel connection increases the anti-Iranian alliance in the region in ways that should concern everyone interested in long-term regional stability. The U.S. sale of F-35s to the UAE should also concerning. The F-35 is a first-strike weapon, particularly well-suited for use in any potential conflict with Iran. While there is no indication that military escalation is likely in the immediate future, these agreements increase polarization in ways that risk escalating existing regional and international tensions.

In short, Israel's agreement with the UAE and Bahrain are far from the "peace" deals some purport them to be. These agreements will not end militarism, human rights abuses, occupation, or war. They will not advance efforts to realize justice for those facing oppression and state violence.

In resolving conflicts, diplomacy is always preferable to violence. But diplomatic relations in and of themselves will not lead to just and lasting peace. And any deal that increases militarization – while doing nothing to end human rights abuses, occupation, and war – is no cause for celebration.

Mike Merryman-Lotze is the American Friends Service Committee's Palestine-Israel Program Director.

Action Alert

Pentagon Misdirection

The initial emergency COVID-19 funding last March included \$1 billion for the Department of Defense to help increase domestic production of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and other medical supplies deemed necessary to battle the pandemic. The DoD, it turns out, had other plans for most of that money, and some of its contractors were the beneficiaries.

\$22 million went to the British company Rolls-Royce for a factory in Mississippi to make propellers for the Navy. \$2 million went to a company in Connecticut to make fabric for Army dress uniforms. Five companies involved in the "small unmanned aerial system" industry (as in the making of drones) shared over \$13 million. A real DoD press release declared that the re-directed funds "saved 14 jobs". Six months later, the U.S. continues to endure a severe shortage of N95 masks amid this public health crisis.

Members of Congress have begun to weigh in on this matter. "While Trump believes we can't afford to extend \$600 a week to 30 million unemployed workers," tweeted Sen. Bernie Sanders, "he had no problem giving a \$688 million bailout to defense contractors like Rolls-Royce not to build more masks and more gowns, but to build more warships and more drones. How Pathetic." Reps. Barbara Lee (D-CA) and Mark Pocan (D-WI) have called for an investigation into the funding redirection. That call needs to be joined and amplified, for the benefit of Americans.

Action: Contact Rep. Jackie Speier (a member of the House Armed Services Committee and one with some say in Pentagon funding) or Anna Eshoo, or whomever represents you, to express how you feel about COVID-19 money going to unrelated military programs. Suggest that a prompt bipartisan investigation into this misdirection would be wholly appropriate while our country's coronavirus caseload and death toll continue to rise. Contact Senators Feinstein and Harris with a similar message.

A Practice Most Foul

Thanks to the Daily Kos for much of the text in this alert.

On September 14, a whistleblower complaint filed by several legal advocacy groups documented severe medical abuses against immigrant people at Irwin County Detention Center in Georgia. This is a private prison operated by LaSalle Corrections housing people held by Immigration Customs and Enforcement (ICE).

In addition to immense neglect regarding COVID-19 testing, safety, and protocols, a staggering number of hysterectomies have been performed at Irwin. According

to the whistleblower, nurse Dawn Wooten, Irwin repeatedly used a particular gynecologist to perform the procedure. According to interviews with Project South, a Georgia nonprofit and one of the groups that filed the complaint, some reported that they didn't understand why they were subjected to the hysterectomies. Some nurses obtained patients' consent by "googling Spanish."

Some would call the practice, in this incidence performed on Black, brown, and Indigenous women, a form of eugenics. Others would call it a form of genocide. By any name, it has no place in our country, but a sad fact is the U.S. is a home for the eugenics movement and has a long history of forced sterilization and non-consensual medical experimentation. And Ms. Wooten's account of state violence in Irwin is consistent with reports of abuse in both ICE detention centers and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) facilities at the southern border, where neglect and retaliation against protesting of horrible conditions are rampant.

Now that this story is out, Congress needs to act regarding the future of ICE and CBP. An institution that forcibly sterilizes and invades the bodies of people of color can hardly be reformed. It must be at least defunded and possibly abolished.

Action: Contact Rep. Speier or Eshoo, as well as Sens. Feinstein and Harris (though she may be a bit busy on the campaign trail and at Supreme Court confirmation hearings) and call for an investigation of abuses by ICE, especially at Irwin County Detention Center, and CBP. Tell them the practice described in the whistleblower complaint is inappropriate for any U.S. agency, and to the extent it is verifiable, that agency should not exist.

Supreme Court Term Limits

With the sad and unfortunate passing of Ruth Bader Ginsburg just a month and a half before the election, the Republican-led Senate is poised to set a time record for confirming a new Supreme Court Justice. If nothing changes, this will be Donald Trump's third pick in a four-year term – at least in part because Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell refused to consider an Obama pick until after the 2016 election. Most of us could not have asked for a worse person than Trump for the task.

Clearly the filling of High Court seats has become a matter of politics, and with it potentially the Court itself. Democrats are considering various remedies for a moment such as this; one containing probably the least degree of politics is a bill proposed by Rep. Ro Khanna (D-CA) and two others that would limit the tenures of Supreme Court justices on the bench to just 18 years. While questions of constitutionality may arise pertaining to removing lifetime appointments, the bill will most likely contain a provision for justices, after 18 years, to hold on to "senior" status – thus not actually be "re-

tired". They could keep their title, and have the opportunity to rotate to lower court duties if they wish.

Polls show a percentage of Americans in favor of such a change in the high 70s, across partisan lines. (That may be at this moment different for Republicans, but it's based on the long term.) Khanna has opined the change "would save the country a lot of agony and help lower the temperature over fights for the court that go to the fault lines of cultural issues and is one of the primary things tearing at our social fabric."

This bill looks to be for another Congressional term and probably administration: The Senate is unlikely to take it up before the end of the year even if the House passed it, and Trump would surely veto it. But the thought process that inspired it would be relevant to both sides of the political spectrum, and it is time to plant a seed that could lead to more civility and less politics in picking the Supreme Court.

Action: Contact Rep. Speier or Eshoo, to urge their support for any bill that would limit the tenure of Supreme Court Justices. Suggest this is a long-term solution that could get politics out of a branch that ought not contain politics.

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**Find out who your Representative is: www.house.gov
If you are not in California, identify your senators here: www.senate.gov**

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Peace Action of San Mateo County
Presents on the Zoom Platform
A talk by Writer and Researcher of
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Spencer Sunshine
The U.S. Far Right and
the Looming Elections
Sunday, October 18, 7 PM

For information on how to
join the meeting,
email smpa@sanmateopeaceaction.org