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Thursday, December 22nd, 2016

Policy & Technology. News & Analysis

Federal Policy & Business

Trump's conflicts of interest could conflict federal employees

The Washington Post: Will a barely noticed report from a little federal agency about whistleblower retaliation have larger implications after the Trump era begins next month?

That question can't be answered now, but there is concern among whistleblower advocates who find both comfort and warning signals in an Office of Special Counsel (OSC) case.

OSC investigates reprisals against federal whistleblowers. There are far too many acts of revenge, but "the unique aspect of this case is the third-party element," said Special Counsel Carolyn Lerner.

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Trump team floats tariffs

CNN: The Trump transition team is floating the possibility of an early executive action to impose tariffs on foreign imports, according to multiple sources. Such a move would deliver on President-elect Donald Trump's "America First" campaign theme. But it's causing alarm among business interests and the pro-trade Republican establishment.

The Trump transition team didn't immediately respond to a request for comment on the prospect of new tariffs. But a transition official said the team has discussed implementing a border adjustment tax measure under consideration by House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Kevin Brady, which would tax imports to spur US manufacturing.

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Trump names adviser Conway as his presidential counselor

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[Five Steps to Creating Your Hybrid Integration Strategy](#)

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Reuters: U.S. President-elect Donald Trump on Thursday named his former campaign manager Kellyanne Conway to serve as counselor to the president, his transition team said in a statement. Conway, 49, currently a senior adviser on Trump's transition team, is widely credited with helping him bring a more disciplined approach to campaigning that helped him win the November presidential election.

In her new post, Conway will play a key advisory role in the White House when Trump takes office on Jan. 20, helping to manage the New York businessman's messaging and legislative priorities, according to the statement.

Trump said Conway "played a crucial role in my victory. She is a tireless and tenacious advocate of my agenda and has amazing insights on how to effectively communicate our message."

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Federal Government IT

Air Force poised to ramp up migration to Office 365, its deputy CIO says

Fedscoop: The path to migrating 550,000 Air Force users to Microsoft's Office 365 has not been without its challenges, but the department's deputy CIO says the department is at the cusp of full-velocity migration.

The Air Force is in the process of an initial 68,000-user rollout to Office 365, which includes SharePoint, Skype, email and storage, Bill Marion told FedScoop. That operation, which he says is poised to speed up in January, is one of many recent Air Force efforts to migrate legacy IT to the cloud.

"That's the big next one that we have going because it's a huge customer base that we're transitioning," Marion said.

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In 2017, Expect Fierce Competition for Defense IT Contracts

Nextgov: 2017 is shaping up to be an insanely competitive year for IT contracts across the U.S. military branches and Defense Department.

According to research from big data and analytics firm Govini, \$210 billion in DOD contracts are set to expire during the 2017 calendar year, and no market will be more competitive than that of IT and services.

Govini projects an average of seven bids per expiring contract in 2017 across IT—up from six bids per contract in 2016—meaning increased competition among vendors competing for an estimated \$9 billion in expiring contracts and untold billions more in new ones.

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Trump threatens electronic rights, EFF warns

CIO: The Electronic Frontier Foundation is keenly worried that President-elect Donald Trump and the Republican-controlled Congress will step up surveillance activities and pass laws to curtail electronic rights.

As a result, the EFF is advising the tech sector to use end-to-end encryption for every transaction by default, and to scrub logs. "You cannot be made to surrender data you do not have," the EFF said.

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Five Steps to Creating Your Hybrid Integration Strategy

Enterprise organizations are adopting cloud-based SaaS applications at increasing rates. And many are simultaneously moving existing applications and systems to public and/or private cloud infrastructures. These trends are making hybrid IT environments the “new normal.”

Gartner refers to the integration tools and technologies required for hybrid environments as Hybrid Integration Platforms (HIPs) and predicts:

“By 2018, more than 40% of organizations will use integration infrastructure that they assemble from HIP-enabling technologies.” (Gartner, Market Guide for Hybrid Integration Platform-Enabling Technologies Published: 17 July 2015 Analyst(s): Jess Thompson, Eric Thoo, Benoit J. Lheureux)

Are you considering a hybrid integration platform? Then you need a hybrid integration strategy. There are many things to consider as you design your strategy—such as your integration “center of gravity,” the amount of control you want to maintain, an accurate picture of your users and a plan for keeping up with project demands.

This white paper helps you better understand the important integration challenges of evolving to a hybrid IT environment, especially with the increased need to integrate with cloud-based applications and systems. In fact, as you design your hybrid integration strategy, we invite you to consider these five essential steps.

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A Natural Evolution: From Data Center Consolidation to IT Optimization

An i360Gov Special Report.

As federal IT organizations make progress consolidating and modernizing their IT infrastructures, the impact of legacy platforms, technologies and traditional data centers still weighs heavy, along with each agency's ability to attract and maintain the skill sets and applications needed to meet 21st century requirements.

If agency officials choose to retain aging platforms and legacy technologies, they tend to limit their ability to take advantage of industry innovations, including cloud computing, advanced analytics and increasingly capable mobile applications.

Meanwhile, employees, partners and constituents expect the public sector to offer the self-service flexibility and instant accessibility to government applications and services that they have become accustomed to from online retailers and other suppliers.

Download i360Gov's new special report for an overview of successful initiatives including:

- An overview of how Hanscom AFB reduced server numbers while increasing services.
- An overview of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's initiative that has already saved more than 40% in overall server energy consumption alone, and 25% in computer room air conditioning energy consumption.
- Tips and best practices for moving from data center consolidation to more flexible, trusted and optimized IT operations.

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Defense / Intelligence / Homeland Security

Air Force poised to ramp up migration to Office 365, its deputy CIO says

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Boeing, Lockheed CEOs Meet with Trump Over F-35, Air Force One

Defense News: WASHINGTON – The CEOs for Lockheed Martin and Boeing met Wednesday with president-elect Donald Trump, with Boeing head Dennis Muilenburg offering Trump his personal promise that the Air Force One replacement program will not exceed \$4 billion.

In addition, the president-elect said he was negotiating with Lockheed to get cost reductions "done beautifully" on the F-35 joint strike fighter.

Lockheed and Boeing are not just the first and second largest defense contractors in the world, but also share the dubious distinction of having come under fire from the president-elect's Twitter account over the cost of the F-35 and Air Force One programs, respectively.

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Netanyahu asks US to veto UN resolution halting Israeli settlements

The Hill: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is calling on the U.S. to veto a U.N. Security Council resolution that would halt Israeli settlement activities.

The Security Council will vote on the resolution, drafted by Egypt, on Thursday.

According to the Times of Israel, the resolution demands that "Israel immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem" because they are a "flagrant violation" of international law.

It stresses that "the cessation of all Israeli settlement activities is essential for salvaging the two-state solution," calling the activities "dangerously imperiling" and saying they threaten the viability of any future Palestinian state in the West Bank.

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Government Healthcare - Policy & IT

CMS finalizes MACRA alternative payment models

Healthcare IT News: The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services on Dec. 20 unveiled a new final rule it said would offer a simpler path for physicians to join alternative payment models to satisfy the requirements of the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015.

But the new models for cardiac and orthopedic care could get push-back from incoming Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price, whose signature is prominent on a September 2016 letter, signed by more 170 members of Congress, voicing opposition to the CMS Innovation Center for implementing mandatory bundled payment models without first testing them in a small area.

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Senators urge action to block drastic drug price hikes

Modern Healthcare: Angered by skyrocketing drug prices, a pair of senators on Wednesday urged Congress to block companies from cornering the market on old, off-patent drugs.

Sens. Susan Collins (R-Maine) and Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.), released findings from a yearlong investigation into companies like Turing Pharmaceuticals, which generated national outrage last year after hiking the price of a life-saving anti-infection drug by more than 5,000 percent.

Committee investigators concluded that Turing and several other companies "engaged in price gouging ... to make massive profits from decades-old life-saving therapies." The lawmakers, top members of the Special Committee on Aging, presented similar findings at three hearings over the past year.

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Health Exchange Enrollment Jumps, Even as G.O.P. Pledges Repeal

The New York Times: WASHINGTON — About 6.4 million people have signed up for health insurance next year under the Affordable Care Act, the Obama administration said Wednesday, as people rushed to purchase plans regardless of Republican promises that the law will be repealed within months.

The new sign-ups — an increase of 400,000 over a similar point last year — mean the health care coverage of millions of consumers could be imperiled by one of the first legislative actions of Donald J. Trump's presidency. Hundreds of thousands of other people who took no action will be automatically re-enrolled by the federal government in the same or similar plans, officials said, and their coverage could be threatened as well. Consumers still have until the end of January to enroll.

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Knowledge Center: Webinars

Federal Data Center Optimization: Do's and Don'ts from the Experts

As federal agencies embrace the U.S. CIO's new Data Center Optimization Initiative and keep pace with growing demand for new services and applications, best practices will help guide them around potential pitfalls. In this i360Gov webinar, leading DoD and civilian IT experts will provide insights on optimization and how agencies can achieve a mandated 25% annual reduction in federal data center expenses by the end of fiscal 2018. Agency executives will gain concrete advice on the best steps to take to achieve more agile, optimized and secure IT operations.

Speakers include:

- **Michael Valivullah**, Chief Technology Officer, National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), USDA
- **Fred Whiteside**, Program Manager, Data Center Consolidation Initiative, Systems Engineering Division, OASAM/OCIO, Department of Labor
- **Bill Lemons**, Director, Federal Systems Engineering, Juniper Networks
- **Stephen Crooks**, Enterprise Solutions Architect, Affigent, LLC

Register now for this complimentary, educational event. If you are not sure if you can attend the live webinar, as long as you register now, you will receive a link to the recording.

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Energy - Policy & Technology

Arizona Vote Puts an End to Net Metering for Solar Customers

Greentech Media: The Arizona Corporation Commission approved significant changes to the state's distributed solar policies late Tuesday evening, which include lowering the credit residential solar customers receive for excess energy sent back to the grid and limiting how long customers can keep their rates.

The decision replaces Arizona's current retail-rate net metering policy with export credits based on short-term valuation methods, which solar advocates say will undermine customer choice and could hurt solar jobs in the state.

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All the state energy legislation from 2016, in one place

Vox: With Donald Trump in the White House and the GOP controlling Congress, all hope for movement forward on climate change and clean energy lies in the states.

Such movement will be more difficult in the absence of federal support. National mandates and incentives serve as a "floor" to state efforts, establishing a common baseline and overall direction. Programs like the Clean Power Plan ensure (or, uh, would have ensured) that every state is taking at least some action.

But the CPP is doomed, as are most federal efforts initiated by President Barack Obama. The floor is going to sink much lower.

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Oklahoma Tries Stronger Measures to Stop Earthquakes in Fracking Areas

Inside Climate News: Oklahoma regulators released for the first time guidelines aimed to reduce the risk of major earthquakes being generated from fracking operations, including a mandate to immediately shut down operations in the event of a quake measuring 3.5 or higher on the Richter scale.

State officials at the Oklahoma Corporation Commission have tried a series of steps in recent years to bring down the number of earthquakes likely linked to local oil and gas activity. All the previous initiatives, however, focused only on underground oil and gas wastewater disposal triggering earthquakes, not hydraulic fracturing activities used to simulate a well before extraction.

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State & Local Government - Policy & Technology

Licensing Medical Marijuana Stirs Up Trouble for States

Stateline: The seven lucky balls that popped out of the Arizona Department of Health Services lottery machine in October produced big winners — not in the state's Powerball game, but in the competition to make money in the medical marijuana industry.

The prize winners were granted licenses to open a medical marijuana dispensary in a state where patients with prescriptions to treat conditions such as glaucoma and cancer spent \$215 million last year on marijuana products. Arizona's public health officials awarded most licenses based on rules designed to place new dispensaries within range of the greatest number of medical-marijuana patients. But when it wasn't clear which applicant was in the most patient-dense area, they used a lottery to randomly select the winners, hoping to sidestep conflict.

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Negotiations to repeal North Carolina 'bathroom bill' fall apart

The Guardian: Plans to repeal the controversial North Carolina law limiting LGBT protections fell apart late on Wednesday, after hours closed-door wrangling.

Lawmakers held a special session to repeal House Bill 2 (HB2), which had spurred extensive economic boycotts and protests in the state. But the legislative body adjourned for the night without having voted on a proposal.

Outgoing governor Pat McCrory had called the special session after the Charlotte city council gutted a local bill that had prompted the law in the first place — a nondiscrimination ordinance that expanded protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity in public accommodations.

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Police And Illegal Immigration: What Our Neighbors Do

NPR: During the campaign, Donald Trump promised to punish "sanctuary cities" — jurisdictions which limit local law enforcement cooperation with federal immigration enforcement. Since the election, cities such as Chicago and San Francisco have doubled down on their sanctuary policies, saying local police need to build trust with communities, including people in the country illegally. Critics of sanctuary policies say the cities are fostering a sense of amnesty for people who break federal law.

It's a long-running argument, and it's not unique to the U.S. Our neighbors to the north and south have also been grappling with the question of police involvement with national immigration law.

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Education - Policy & Technology

Teachers of Tomorrow Launches Resources to Help Battle the Growing Teacher Shortage

THE Journal: Teachers of Tomorrow, an online and in-person teacher certification program, has launched resources designed to help education leaders battle the growing teacher shortage.

The first resource is an infographic with teacher shortage data from around the country, including insights from 15 education leaders and their suggestions on how to combat the growing shortage. The infographic can be found below and on this site.

The next resources will provide specific ways on becoming a teacher today. With an eye on the highest-need areas, the organization will also launch information on how to become a math teacher and how to become a special education teacher. Almost all schools have needs in these subject areas.

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State authorization rule, long in the works, faces opposition in new Congress

Inside Higher Ed: The U.S. Department of Education, with a month to go until the transition of power, has finalized a rule that clarifies how colleges become authorized to offer online programs to students in other states -- an effort in the works since the first years of the Obama administration. But the rule is by all indications dead on arrival.

The final rule, released on Dec. 16, requires colleges that offer online education programs to follow each state's authorization process -- which often involves filling out an application and paying a fee to a local higher education agency -- and clarifies disclosure and student complaint procedures. It also recognizes that states can participate in reciprocity agreements.

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Summing Up Results From TIMSS, PISA

Education Week: Students in the United States are by and large treading water in the two largest international benchmarking tests in math, science, and reading, which both released 2015 results in recent weeks.

U.S. 15-year-olds did not perform significantly differently in science or reading on the Program for International Student Assessment in 2015 compared with their showing in previous years, and their math performance significantly declined since 2012 and 2009, the last two times PISA was given. That put the United States roughly in the middle of education systems in reading and science on PISA, but below average in math.

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