EPA News Highlights 3.19.18

Finger Lakes Times: Dundee Getting EPA Funds For New Bus
The Dundee Central School District will be getting a new bus through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Diesel Emissions Reduction Act funding. Nationwide, the EPA is awarding $8.7 million to replace or retrofit 452 older diesel buses. In New York, $460,000 is going to replace or retrofit 23 buses, including one in Dundee. Stephanie Cleveland, Dundee's transportation director, learned of the EPA program last year when district officials were looking at purchasing new buses. "We will replacing an older model diesel bus with an approved, newer model bus that meets the requirements of the program," Cleveland said. "The bus submitted for the rebate will be scrapped as part of the requirements of the rebate program. We are very pleased to have been selected for this rebate."

St. Louis Post-Dispatch: EPA Extends Rebates To Missouri Schools For Cleaner Bus Upgrades
The Environmental Protection Agency is offering rebates to 18 Missouri school districts — including some near St. Louis — to replace older, diesel school buses. The $745,000 total extended to schools around the state will help cover the replacement of 40 buses. The sum is part of a broader outlay of $8.7 million nationally for bus replacements and retrofits, funded through the EPA's Diesel Emissions Reduction Act program. The rebates offered through the program will knock down the sticker price that eligible school districts pay by $15,000 to $20,000 apiece, depending on the size of the bus. St. Louis-area school districts to receive the funding include De Soto, Mehlville, Valley Park, New Haven and the Lincoln County R-III School District, in Troy, which is by far the state's largest recipient of the money, with $150,000 to be put toward 10 new buses. No other district received more than $60,000 to help with three bus upgrades.

Farm Futures: EPA's Pruitt Talks WOTUS, RFS With Farm Bureau Members
EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt talked about the agency's role in American agriculture during a March 14 appearance before more than 300 members of the Iowa, Missouri, Ohio and Alabama Farm Bureau. "I am committed to providing America's farmers with the transparency and regulatory certainty they deserve from Washington," Pruitt said. "EPA is working with our nation's first environmentalists as partners to preserve and steward our natural resources while supporting local economies."

E&E News: Science Reform Eyed As Path To Unravel Endangerment Finding
The plan now being developed at U.S. EPA to restrict the science the agency uses could affect the crafting of regulations for years and become one of the most enduring parts of Administrator Scott Pruitt's legacy. The plan under consideration is expected to limit the science used in EPA regulation to studies where the data could be published and reproduced. And while the agency is still considering the exact scope of its restrictions, both critics and supporters of the plan agree that it will fundamentally transform the way EPA uses research. Supporters say it will prevent opaque "secret science" from being used to form regulations that could affect billions of dollars in economic activity. Opponents say it will eliminate from consideration much of the groundbreaking research the agency has used to protect Americans against pollution.

National News Highlights 3.19.18

The Washington Post: Fourth Austin Explosion Possibly Detonated By Tripwire, Leaving 2 Injured, Police Say
Police in Austin said an explosion in a residential neighborhood Sunday night appeared to be related to the three bombs that detonated earlier this month, plunging the Texas capital further into a frightening mystery that forced residents to remain locked in their home as investigators scoured the area for answers. The blast Sunday, which injured two men who were riding bicycles through a residential area, was the latest in a string of explosions to rock Austin, which has been on edge since the previous bombings killed two people and seriously injured a third. Authorities have seemed at a loss to explain who could be setting off these devices or why, saying only that the bombs were sophisticated and could have been motivated by racial bias, although they acknowledged that this remains only a theory. This latest explosion injured two men in their 20s in the southwest portion of Austin. While the previous blasts all involved packages left at homes, this explosive was on the side of the road and possibly triggered by a tripwire, said Brian Manley, the interim Austin police chief.

ED_002389_00011219-00001

The Wall Street Journal: Trump Steps Up Attacks On Mueller Investigation

President Donald Trump and his legal team over the weekend intensified attacks on the special counsel's probe into possible Russian election interference, departing from a previously more cooperative posture and prompting more urgent warnings from senators not to undermine the investigation. In his first Twitter post to target the special counsel, Robert Mueller, by name, Mr. Trump on Saturday said the probe "should never have been started in that there was no collusion and there was no crime." On Sunday, the president mentioned Mr. Mueller again, suggesting his team of prosecutors consisted of "hardened Democrats" intent on taking down the Republican president. Mr. Trump for months has criticized the Russia probe, but his weekend comments showed a more confrontational tone toward Mr. Mueller and prompted senators from both parties to caution the president against taking steps to end the special counsel's investigation. The warnings to Mr. Trump were also triggered by a statement Saturday by the president's personal lawyer, John Dowd, calling for the Justice Department to step in to stop the Mueller investigation.

TRUMP TWEETS

Finger Lakes Times

http://www.fltimes.com/news/dundee-getting-epa-funds-for-new-bus/article_41045558-ab17-548a-b386-fdb61e0d2d87.html

Dundee Getting EPA Funds For New Bus

By Mike Hibbard, 3/18/18

DUNDEE — The Dundee Central School District will be getting a new bus through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Diesel Emissions Reduction Act funding.

Nationwide, the EPA is awarding $8.7 million to replace or retrofit 452 older diesel buses. In New York, $460,000 is going to replace or retrofit 23 buses, including one in Dundee.

Stephanie Cleveland, Dundee's transportation director, learned of the EPA program last year when district officials were looking at purchasing new buses.

"We will replacing an older model diesel bus with an approved, newer model bus that meets the requirements of the program," Cleveland said. "The bus submitted for the rebate will be scrapped as part of the requirements of the rebate program. We are very pleased to have been selected for this rebate."

Federal officials said the new and retrofitted buses will reduce pollutants linked to health problems such as asthma and lung damage.

The EPA launched its "Clean School Bus USA" program 15 years ago.

St. Louis Post-Dispatch

http://www.stltoday.com/business/local/epa-extends-rebates-to-missouri-schools-for-cleaner-bus-upgrades/article_a1fedc95-ba8d-560c-a948-f65cae17cc5f.html

EPA Extends Rebates To Missouri Schools For Cleaner Bus Upgrades

By Bryce Gray, 3/18/18

The Environmental Protection Agency is offering rebates to 18 Missouri school districts — including some near St. Louis — to replace older, diesel school buses.

ED_002389_00011219-00002

The $745,000 total extended to schools around the state will help cover the replacement of 40 buses. The sum is part of a broader outlay of $8.7 million nationally for bus replacements and retrofits, funded through the EPA's Diesel Emissions Reduction Act program.

The rebates offered through the program will knock down the sticker price that eligible school districts pay by $15,000 to $20,000 apiece, depending on the size of the bus.

St. Louis-area school districts to receive the funding include De Soto, Mehlville, Valley Park, New Haven and the Lincoln County R-III School District, in Troy, which is by far the state's largest recipient of the money, with $150,000 to be put toward 10 new buses. No other district received more than $60,000 to help with three bus upgrades.

The EPA says the initiative aims to protect the health of children by decreasing emissions of pollutants like nitrogen oxides and particulate matter.

"There are links to health problems like asthma and lung damage, and with school buses carrying our most treasured possessions — our youth — we'd like (the funding) to energize some work in those areas by cities and states," said David Bryan, a public affairs specialist at the agency's regional headquarters near Kansas City.

Funding upgrades to cleaner school buses is gaining widespread traction at other levels of government, too. Though not part of a coordinated effort, the EPA's move is similar to investment under consideration by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, which signaled that it is likely to pursue similar upgrades with at least some of its $41 million from the Volkswagen emissions scandal settlement.

Deliberation on how to spend that money is still ongoing, but DNR officials suggested that the EPA's separate move could help "get the most bang for the buck" in terms of funding bus replacements.

"They're separate but certainly related," said Darcy Bybee, director of DNR's Air Pollution Control Program. "The timing is good."

Farm Futures

http://www.farmfutures.com/epa/epas-pruitt-talks-wotus-rfs-farm-bureau-members

EPA's Pruitt Talks WOTUS, RFS With Farm Bureau Members

By Farm Futures, 3/19/18

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt talked about the agency's role in American agriculture during a March 14 appearance before more than 300 members of the Iowa, Missouri, Ohio and Alabama Farm Bureau.

"I am committed to providing America's farmers with the transparency and regulatory certainty they deserve from Washington," Pruitt said. "EPA is working with our nation's first environmentalists as partners to preserve and steward our natural resources while supporting local economies."

Topics covered include:

- Waters of the U.S. rules
- Continued efforts to engage in cooperative federalism on issues affecting farmers and ranchers.
- The Renewable Fuel Standard

Quotes from attending Farm Bureaus

ED_002389_00011219-00003

"Administrator Pruitt is willing to work with the people on the front lines instead of against them," said Missouri Farm Bureau President Blake Hurst. "This is a welcome change, and we look forward to making progress on environmental policy with his team."

"I appreciate the new direction Administrator Pruitt is taking the EPA and the outreach that has been made to the farming community," said John DeLoach, a young farmer in town with the Alabama Farmers Federation. "It is encouraging to see the agency working with, rather than against, our nations' farmers in carrying out their mission."

"We appreciate Administrator Pruitt's support on critical issues such as rescinding the Waters of the U.S. (WOTUS) rule and recognizing farmers and ranchers as partners in conservation and environmental stewardship," said Iowa Farm Bureau President Craig Hill.

"Ohio farmers appreciate Administrator Pruitt's willingness to listen to our concerns," said Ohio Farm Bureau President Frank Burkett III. "He shares Farm Bureau's belief that protecting the environment and farming profitably are not exclusive of one another. We appreciate that he chose to spend valuable time with us."

E&E News

https://www.eenews.net/climatewire/2018/03/19/stories/1060076695

Science Reform Eyed As Path To Unravel Endangerment Finding

By Scott Waldman, 3/19/18

The plan now being developed at U.S. EPA to restrict the science the agency uses could affect the crafting of regulations for years and become one of the most enduring parts of Administrator Scott Pruitt's legacy.

The plan under consideration is expected to limit the science used in EPA regulation to studies where the data could be published and reproduced. And while the agency is still considering the exact scope of its restrictions, both critics and supporters of the plan agree that it will fundamentally transform the way EPA uses research.

Supporters say it will prevent opaque "secret science" from being used to form regulations that could affect billions of dollars in economic activity. Opponents say it will eliminate from consideration much of the groundbreaking research the agency has used to protect Americans against pollution.

EPA's expected reform efforts are inspired by legislative measures boosted by Republican Rep. Lamar Smith of Texas, chairman of the House Committee on Science, Space and Technology and one of Congress' chief antagonists toward mainstream climate scientists. Smith has pushed legislation in recent years that would require new EPA regulations to be based on science that is reproducible and whose data is public. The most recent iteration of Smith's legislation, which is called the "Honest and Open New EPA Science Treatment (HONEST) Act," passed out of the House a year ago but has failed to advance in the Senate.

But a group of influential conservative voices, including Trump EPA transition team members and researchers from conservative think tanks, want Pruitt to go further. They want Pruitt — who recently told a group of conservatives gathered at the Heritage Foundation that the agency was working on the issue — to impose the requirement on all science used at the agency. Some even see it as a way to potentially go after the endangerment finding for greenhouse gases, which is the legal underpinning of EPA's climate regulations.

Science transparency can be used to go after the supporting documents for the endangerment finding, to evaluate its quality, said Pat Michaels, director of the Center for the Study of Science at the libertarian Cato Institute, which had a representative at the Heritage Foundation meeting. Michaels has long criticized climate models used in future predictions, and he believes that making data around the models transparent would prove his theory and make it easier to pick apart the models.

"We're all for rigorous examination of the models that are being used, especially the models for the endangerment finding," he said. "It's pretty apparent they're not working well, and if, for some reason, it's left to me and my few friends to point this out, I think it would be a good idea [and] that the agency should do it."

Regardless of whether it becomes a club against the endangerment finding, the directive could have significant impacts for studies now in place, said Bernard Goldstein, dean emeritus of the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health and the former EPA assistant administrator for research and development in the Reagan administration. For example, air pollution rules must be re-evaluated by the agency every five years under the Clean Air Act, and the science data directive could sharply limit "just about everything" in those reviews, he said. That includes research from around the world, and there is little chance that scientists in Britain, France or Australia would turn over raw data to the Trump administration, he said.

"You're basically throwing out the data you have, that you've built up over many, many years," he said.

In pushing back against the estimates by EPA's career staff that the "HONEST Act" would cost more than $250 million annually, Pruitt's EPA staff suggested that it would not apply to many studies that it would rely upon, according to a Congressional Budget Office analysis. That may suggest that the agency is now looking at crafting the plan to fit future regulations, rather than a retroactive look at those in place. That would mean Pruitt could roll out the plan in a dramatic public presentation as he did with his reform of the science advisory boards, but it would have a far smaller impact.

EPA didn't respond to a request for comment about the expected announcement.

Bad for industry?
Critics of the proposal say it would have lasting damage and might even earn industry's ire because it could easily be reversed by the next administration.

The requirement would privilege industry data, because many key studies upon which regulations were built are historical and don't have raw data available, said David Michaels, a George Washington University epidemiologist and former assistant secretary at the Occupational Safety and Health Administration in the Obama administration. That means EPA's regulatory, or deregulatory, agenda wouldn't be based on the best available science but only that which has been produced by industry and has raw data. One example, he said, of studies that would be excluded by data restrictions is some of the key research on lead, which goes back years, and which Pruitt has said is a priority for the agency this year.

"Industry would provide the studies they've done that show the effects are minimal or less, and they would provide the raw data," he said. "But some of the historical studies which have found a higher risk associated with this exposure might not be available, and so this sort of process could support that rolling back of regulations even though good science would tell you not to do that."

Even if the science reforms are issued through a directive, and it is wiped out by the first post-Trump EPA administrator, it has the potential to create lasting damage for years, he said. That sort of back-and-forth creates an uncertainty that even industry will oppose, he said.

"If this is being used to alter regulation, then those take many years to change, and that's a concern," he said. "It's bad for public health; it's bad for industry, which needs some certainty."

Pruitt mentioned that a plan was forthcoming to a group of conservatives gathered at the Heritage Foundation last week. Some of those who were there, or whose group was in attendance, want Pruitt to go further than the "HONEST Act."

ED_002389_00011219-00005

"I hope that it's tighter than that," said Steve Milloy, a former coal executive and member of Trump's EPA transition team who has pushed the agency to impose such restrictions for years. "I hope that EPA does not regulate at all unless the underlying scientific data can be made available, and I don't think there is any legislation yet that is that strong."

Milloy said the final plan would likely not go as far as he would like, because some industry groups, including the pharmaceutical industry, are lobbying against it. He said his goal is that EPA does not rely on any data that cannot be challenged.

"If they don't want to defend their data, I'm hoping that is the last we see of it," he said.

Critics of the plan say the greatest danger of the plan, and perhaps its most problematic legacy is its ability to quickly spread to other federal agencies. It's likely that if proponents see the plan put in place at EPA, they'll seek it in the Federal Drug Administration or Department of Agriculture, anywhere that government has imposed regulations, said Goldstein, the former EPA official in the Reagan administration. It would also interfere with ongoing regulatory efforts that have been underway for years, he said, wiping out the potential use of an unprecedented amount of essential research.

"This scares the hell out of me and has for quite some time," he said. "You can just about pick any agency that's using science on regulatory things and say, 'Hey, if we get away with it at EPA, we can do it for any of these.'"

The Washington Post

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2018/03/18/two-injured-in-explosion-in-austin-police-say/?utm_term=.b679eef88fe8

Fourth Austin Explosion Possibly Detonated By Tripwire, Leaving 2 Injured, Police Say

By Eva Ruth Moravec, Meagan Flynn, Mark Berman, 3/19/18

AUSTIN — Police in Austin said an explosion in a residential neighborhood Sunday night appeared to be related to the three bombs that detonated earlier this month, plunging the Texas capital further into a frightening mystery that forced residents to remain locked in their home as investigators scoured the area for answers.

The blast Sunday, which injured two men who were riding bicycles through a residential area, was the latest in a string of explosions to rock Austin, which has been on edge since the previous bombings killed two people and seriously injured a third. Authorities have seemed at a loss to explain who could be setting off these devices or why, saying only that the bombs were sophisticated and could have been motivated by racial bias, although they acknowledged that this remains only a theory.

This latest explosion injured two men in their 20s in the southwest portion of Austin. While the previous blasts all involved packages left at homes, this explosive was on the side of the road and possibly triggered by a tripwire, said Brian Manley, the interim Austin police chief.

“We are working under the belief that this is related to the other bombing incidents that have occurred in our community over the last couple weeks,” Manley said at a news conference early Monday.

Yet this latest blast has only deepened the uncertainty surrounding what is happening in Austin at a time when the city has been inundated with visitors for the South by Southwest festival.

The first two bombs killed black people — a 39-year-old construction worker and a 17-year-old high school student — related to prominent members of Austin’s African American community who were also close personal friends. The third bomb seriously injured a 75-year-old Hispanic woman, but it was addressed to a different home and apparently exploded when she was carrying it, according to two people familiar with the case.

The first three explosions detonated in the eastern part of Austin, impacting areas where the city's black and Hispanic residents live, which prompted some in the area to question whether the initial blast would have prompted more urgency had it gone off in the more affluent, predominantly white neighborhoods.

This fourth explosion went off in the southwestern part of the city, far from the first three, and police said Monday that the two men injured were both white. They were taken to the hospital with serious but not life-threatening injuries, officials said, and the hospital said they were in good condition.

Still, police said they were still considering whether at least some of the bombings could have been a hate crime.

"We've said from the beginning that we're not willing to rule anything out, just because when you rule something out you limit your focus," Manley said in an interview Monday with ABC's "Good Morning America." "This does change the concerns that we had initially, although we have still not yet ruled it out until we understand what the ideology or motive is behind the suspect or suspects."

Manley said in the interview that police do not have any specific evidence leading them to a particular suspect, and he reiterated his plea to the public for tips and information.

Authorities have described the explosives as the sophisticated work of a person or people who know what they are doing, saying that the bombers have been able to assemble and deliver these packages without setting them off at any point. Manley said the explosion Sunday night suggested that the bomber is even more proficient than authorities feared.

"If this explosion last night was the result of a bomb that was utilizing tripwire technology, that is showing a different level of skill, above what we were already concerned that this suspect or suspects possess," Manley said.

Austin Mayor Steve Adler said that while the initial concern after the first bombings focused on packages left on doorsteps, Sunday night's explosion caused officials to cast a wider net.

"We understand the anxiousness that we all feel, but there is just an army of law enforcement personnel working on this at this point," he said Monday in a telephone interview with The Washington Post.

Adler said that "with each additional event, the horrible part is that people are getting hurt." But, he added, "it also means that law enforcement folks get additional forensic evidence."

The fourth explosion went off just hours after the Austin police made a public appeal in the case, increasing the reward for information to $100,000 and addressing the bomber or bombers in particular.

"These events in Austin have garnered worldwide attention," Manley said during the earlier announcement. "And we assure you that we are listening. We want to understand what brought you to this point, and we want to listen to you."

After Sunday's explosion, Manley urged residents in the surrounding neighborhood to remain in their homes while investigators continue to probe the area. Because of the darkness, he said, police may not know until after sunrise whether other suspicious devices were left in the neighborhood. He said that people who needed to leave their homes should call 911 for an escort.

"Given the darkness, we have not really had the opportunity to really look at this blast site to determine what has happened," Manley said at a news conference late Sunday. "It's obvious there's been an explosion; it's obvious it caused significant injures to two people, and it is important right now for anyone in the neighborhood behind us to remain inside and give us time to work through this."

ED_002389_00011219-00007

Manley also said that officers were working to clear a backpack left in the area. The FBI and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives were also on the scene, and Manley said more than 500 officers have followed up on 435 leads and have conducted 236 interviews. None have resulted in a suspect so far.

Steve Brown, 53, had gone out to dinner Sunday and was returning home when he saw the police tape.

"It's kind of surreal," he told The Washington Post. "It had been on the other side of town — now it's on our street."

He said his 80-year-old mother-in-law was at home and told them she heard a "boom."

Early Monday, the Austin Independent School District announced on Facebook that it was keeping school buses out of the neighborhood and would be excusing any related tardiness or absences. Regents School of Austin, a private Christian school near the neighborhood where the explosive went off, said class would begin later Monday before ultimately canceling school.

After the first explosion on March 2 killed Anthony Stephan House, police said initially described it as an "isolated incident." However, when two more bombs exploded 10 days later, police reversed course and said they believed all three were related.

The first blast on March 12 killed Draylen Mason, a high school senior well known for his love of music, playing everything from funk to mariachi to classical music. The second bomb that day critically wounded Esperanza Herrera, who was visiting her mother's house where the package was delivered.

At least two of the victims of the bombings have had an connection, though its significance was not immediately clear. House's stepfather, Freddie Dixon, told The Post last week that he is close to Mason's grandfather, Norman Mason. They were fraternity brothers, and Norman Mason also attended the church where Dixon was once a pastor, Dixon said.

Dixon said he did not think the connection was a coincidence.

"Somebody's done their homework on both of us, and they knew what they were doing," he said, adding that he believed the explosions were possibly a hate crime or the result of a vendetta.

Authorities have said they do not think the bombings were connected to the South by Southwest festival, though fears from these explosions creeped into the event, with a bomb threat forcing the Roots to cancel a concert they were going to hold Saturday night. Police said they arrested a 26-year-old Trevor Weldon Ingram in connection with that threat.

The Wall Street Journal

https://www.wsj.com/articles/trump-says-he-never-saw-mccabe-take-notes-1521385809

Trump Steps Up Attacks On Mueller Investigation

By Louise Radnofsky, Rebecca Ballhaus and Aruna Viswanatha, 3/19/18

WASHINGTON—President Donald Trump and his legal team over the weekend intensified attacks on the special counsel's probe into possible Russian election interference, departing from a previously more cooperative posture and prompting more urgent warnings from senators not to undermine the investigation.

In his first Twitter post to target the special counsel, Robert Mueller, by name, Mr. Trump on Saturday said the probe "should never have been started in that there was no collusion and there was no crime." On Sunday, the president mentioned Mr. Mueller again, suggesting his team of prosecutors consisted of "hardened Democrats" intent on taking down the Republican president.

Mr. Trump for months has criticized the Russia probe, but his weekend comments showed a more confrontational tone toward Mr. Mueller and prompted senators from both parties to caution the president against taking steps to end the special counsel's investigation. The warnings to Mr. Trump were also triggered by a statement Saturday by the president's personal lawyer, John Dowd, calling for the Justice Department to step in to stop the Mueller investigation.

Such a step "would be the beginning of the end of his presidency, because we are a rule-of-law nation," Sen. Lindsey Graham (R., S.C.) said on CNN.

Rep. Trey Gowdy (R., S.C.) said on Fox that Mr. Dowd's remarks were "a disservice," adding, "If you have an innocent client, Mr. Dowd, act like it." Mr. Gowdy, who has said he isn't seeking re-election, is a member of the House Intelligence Committee and a former federal prosecutor.

The latest flare-up over the Russia probe came days after news that the special counsel had subpoenaed Mr. Trump's company, the Trump Organization, for documents related to his investigation. It also came after the Justice Department fired a former top Federal Bureau of Investigation official whom Mr. Trump has repeatedly criticized publicly and who is a potential witness to the events surrounding Mr. Trump's dismissal last year of James Comey as FBI director.

Mr. Mueller is investigating the firing for evidence of obstruction of justice, as part of his probe of any ties between the Trump 2016 campaign and Moscow. That investigation has led to five public guilty pleas, including by two top Trump campaign aides, while Mr. Mueller last month returned indictments of three Russian companies and 13 Russian citizens on charges of engaging in a widespread effort to interfere in the election.

Mr. Trump has said his presidential campaign didn't collude with Russia, and he has denied attempting to block the probe. At times, he has also indicated that he doubts U.S. intelligence assessments that Russia attempted to tip the election to Mr. Trump. Russia has denied those assessments as well.

Mr. Trump's legal team has sought to provide Mr. Mueller the documents he has requested and has discussed offering a sit-down interview with Mr. Trump if it would more quickly end the investigation. Mr. Trump's attorneys have also urged him to show restraint in his tweets and not antagonize the special counsel.

Mr. Trump in another tweet approved of the late-Friday firing of Andrew McCabe, a former FBI deputy director, and leveled a new attack on Mr. Comey and what he called the "lies and corruption going on at the highest levels" of the FBI.

The firing of Mr. McCabe by Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who himself has come under fire from Mr. Trump, came after the Justice Department's inspector general found a "lack of candor" in Mr. McCabe's disclosures about contact with the news media, in relation to an October 2016 Wall Street Journal report.

The FBI's Office of Professional Responsibility recommends dismissal if "lack of candor" is found, but allies of Mr. McCabe say the finding was rushed and lacks a substantive basis.

The McCabe firing, which came hours before he was set to retire, depriving him of at least part of pension, sparked debate over whether it was merited or was an attempt to undermine the Mueller probe. Mr. Trump's attacks also follow the news that Mr. McCabe wrote memos describing his conversations with Mr. Trump and turned them over Mr. Mueller.

A person familiar with the memos said they outlined three or four meetings or calls between Messrs. McCabe and Trump. While it wasn't the main point of the memos, the documents say that in each interaction, Mr. Trump commented on Mr. McCabe's wife, who ran for the state Senate in Virginia in 2015 as a Democrat and received campaign funding from the political organization of then- Gov. Terry McAuliffe, a longtime friend of Bill and Hillary Clinton. Mr. Trump tried to cast doubt on the report of the memos, writing on Twitter Sunday that he "spent very little time with Andrew McCabe, but he never took notes when he was with me."

ED_002389_00011219-00009

In remarks after the McCabe firing, John Brennan, director of the Central Intelligence Agency under President Barack Obama and an official in the George W. Bush administration, said on Twitter that Mr. Trump would be seen as a "disgraced demagogue,'' adding, "You may scapegoat Andy McCabe, but you will not destroy America."

The White House circulated a statement Sunday night from Ty Cobb, the White House lawyer handling the Russia probe. "In response to media speculation and related questions being posed to the Administration, the White House yet again confirms that the President is not considering or discussing the firing of the Special Counsel, Robert Mueller," Mr. Cobb said.

Rep. Mark Meadows (R., N.C.) said he was comfortable with the termination of Mr. McCabe and didn't see it as unfair, from what he knew.

"Based on the information that I have...I would think that the termination of Andrew McCabe by the Department of Justice and FBI was certainly appropriate," he said.

Mr. Trump's tweet suggesting an anti-GOP bent to the Mueller team came even though Mr. Mueller is a registered Republican and was appointed and is overseen by another Republican, Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein. Mr. Trump and his supporters have pointed to indications that some members of the Mueller team, including deputy Andrew Weissman, are Democrats and therefore can't be impartial. Mr. Weissman attended Mrs. Clinton's election-night party in New York, according to people familiar with his attendance.

Other lawyers on the team have made donations to Democratic candidates in the past, which under federal law can't be a barrier when they are being assessed for career positions in the agency.

The White House on Sunday said cooperation with Mr. Mueller hadn't ended. "I don't think that the president or anybody right now in our White House is suggesting not cooperating in any way with the Mueller investigation," said Marc Short, the president's director of legislative affairs, on CBS.

ED_002389_00011219-00010

TRUMP TWEETS

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump · 10m

A total WITCH HUNT with massive conflicts of interest!

6.1K 2.4K 8.5K

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump · 1h

.@seanhannity on @foxandfriends now! Great! 8:18 A.M.

8.2K 2.7K 13K

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump · Mar 18

Why does the Mueller team have 13 hardened Democrats, some big Crooked Hillary supporters, and Zero Republicans? Another Dem recently added...does anyone think this is fair? And yet, there is NO COLLUSION!

78K 28K 103K

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump · Mar 18

Spent very little time with Andrew McCabe, but he never took notes when he was with me. I don't believe he made memos except to help his own agenda, probably at a later date. Same with lying James Comey. Can we call them Fake Memos?

51K 28K 110K

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump · Mar 18

Wow, watch Comey lie under oath to Senator G when asked "have you ever been an anonymous source...or known someone else to be an anonymous source...?" He said strongly "never, no." He lied as shown clearly on @foxandfriends.

27K 24K 86K

ED_002389_00011219-00011