APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

GUN CONTROL

Senate Renews Ban on Plastic Guns, Rejects Expanded Restrictions

As the one-year anniversary of the Sandy Hook shooting approaches, the vote deals yet another blow to advocates of stricter gun controls

By Maya Rhodan @m_rhodan Dec. 09, 2013

Accessed at 7:44 PM

Congress renewed an expiring ban on plastic firearms that can go undetected in metal detectors on Monday, though tougher restrictions on the guns did not pass. The Senate approved the 10-year extension, narrowly missing the midnight deadline.

Last week the House passed the measure, which is now headed to the President to be signed into law.

The bill that passed the Senate on Monday is less stringent than the one proposed by Senator Chuck Schumer, who pushed for a ban on detachable metal parts, which can be removed to pass through security screenings

The rejection of Schumer’s push by Republican lawmakers marks yet another setback for stricter gun legislation since the Dec. 14 massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn.

[AP]
APPENDIX 2

GUN CONTROL

White House Touting Mental Health Funding After Sandy Hook School Shooting

The administration is shifting focus to mental health in its effort to curb shootings

By Noah Rayman Dec. 10, 2013
Accessed at 8:05 PM

Vice President Joe Biden will announce Tuesday that the Obama administration is promising $100 million to improve mental health services as part of its response to the deadly school shooting in Connecticut almost one year ago, a White House official said.

The White House, with Biden at the forefront, has pledged to find ways to stop mass shootings, but it failed to push any new gun control legislation through Congress, even after the massacre of 26 people, including 20 children, at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., late last year. A Biden-led task force identified mental illness as another focus in the effort to stem shootings, and the White House has already set it as a priority, including by enforcing a 2008 law that requires insurers to treat mental health as a physical ailment.

Biden will unveil the new funding Tuesday afternoon at the White House “with families who lost loved ones during the shooting in Newtown,” the White House official said. The money comes from existing government funding: $50 million from the Department of Health and Human Services to expand behavioral health services for people with mental illness or addiction, and another $50 million from the Department of Agriculture to expand mental health services in rural areas.
APPENDIX 3
IRAN

Pivotal Senator Backs Out of Iran Sanctions Push

The Obama administration asks Congress not to interfere with nuclear talks

By Dan Kedmey Dec. 11, 2013
Accessed at 8:07 PM

A key Senate Democrat has agreed to withhold his vote for further sanctions on Iran until the Obama administration’s nuclear talks run their course.

According to the Wall Street Journal, Senator Tim Johnson said that he agreed with Secretary of State John Kerry that additional sanctions could drive Iranians away from the negotiating table. Johnson helms the Senate Banking Committee, a pivotal position for introducing sanctions legislation.

Congressmen on both sides of the aisle have criticized the Obama administration’s handling of negotiations, arguing that a recent interim deal was too weak and a new round of sanctions was needed should a long-term fix fall through.

[WSJ]
APPENDIX 4

IMMIGRATION

Senator Will Fast To Support Immigration Reform

Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) accepts invitation from reform advocacy group Fast4Families

By Alex Rogers @arogDC Dec. 12, 2013

Accessed at 7:46 PM

After a year of frustrating setbacks for immigration reform activists, Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin has decided to stop eating for one day to call attention to the cause.

Fast4Families, a group that advocates a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants through coordinated hunger strikes, met with the Illinois Democrat on the National Mall Wednesday, a Durbin aide said, and Durbin accepted the group’s invitation to join the fast. President Barack Obama and First Michelle Obama met with Fast4Families late last month.

“This fast will coincide with the observance of the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the patroness of Mexico and one of the most solemn days on the Catholic calendar for many,” Durbin said in a statement. “There is no excuse for the failure of the U.S. House of Representatives to call our bipartisan Senate bill for a vote. [House] Speaker [John] Boehner is ignoring the injustice of our broken immigration system; the suffering of millions of innocent Dreamers and the values at the heart of this great immigrant nation.”
Last week, Boehner revived the hopes of immigration reform advocates by hiring Rebecca Tallent, a top policy aide on this issue. The Senate passed a reform bill earlier this year that has yet to be taken up by the House.

Durbin will fast from 7 p.m. Thursday until 7 p.m. Friday.
APPENDIX 5

GOVERNMENT

Women in Federal Workforce Face More Obstacles Than Men

A new report finds women face more challenges reaching top positions and salaries

By Nate Rawlings @naterawlings Dec. 13, 2013

Accessed at 7:52 PM

Despite years of gains toward equality, women in the federal workforce experience more challenges than men, according to a government report released on Thursday.

The report, from the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, said that the biggest obstacles hindering women’s advancement to top positions was a lack of flexibility for women raising young children and a lack of mentoring and training for top jobs.

According to the AP, women make up 44 percent of the federal workforce, but just 30 percent of senior executive service positions.

Women earn roughly 89 cents for every dollar a man earns, which is better than the private sector, the report said, but the pay gap is worse among minority women.

Among the recommendations are that federal agencies offer different start times for workers and expand telework policies and satellite work centers to reduce commutes. The EEOC recommends formal mentoring programs and track increases in opportunities for women.

[AP]
APPENDIX 6

WHITE HOUSE

Newtown Anniversary Comes One Painful Day Early For Obama

A shooting in Colorado was a frightening moment for the White House one year after Sandy Hook

By Zeke J Miller @zekejmiller Dec. 14, 2013

Accessed at 8:13 PM

An aide placed a note in front of the president on the ornate wooden table in the Roosevelt Room. Somberly, he informed the roomful of cringing newly elected mayors that there had been a school shooting and the details were scarce.

The scene on Friday at the White House, just before Saturday’s one-year anniversary of the horrifying school shooting in Newtown, Conn., came after a student at a Colorado high school critically wounded another student before fatally shooting himself. It was eerily reminiscent for the President Barack Obama and his aides to the day when the most powerful man in the world learned of horror in small-town New England and was powerless to stop it. The day he cried in the Oval Office. The day Obama called “the worst day of my presidency.”

“Whenever a situation arises — whether it’s a tornado, terrorist attack, hurricane, active shooter situation, or wildfire — there are processes in place to brief the President and coordinate a response to ensure the local leaders and first responders are receiving the support they need,” a White House spokesman, Bobby Whithorne, told TIME.
“We’re planning for the worst but hoping for the best,” a White House official said.

“There’s no question these situations are heart wrenching. All of us see families and communities torn apart in the matter of minutes, but our sole focus, from the President on down, is to do everything we can to support the first responders saving lives and keeping folks out of harms way.”

Tuscon, Aurora, and Oak Creek are events that have become indelibly etched into the psyche of the Obama White House. Moments that have shocked a nation and demanded maybe the most difficult of presidential duties: healer-in-chief.

But school shootings are different, aides, especially since Newtown, where 20 children and six adults died before the gunman killed himself. Aides say that for Obama, like millions around the country, moments like Friday’s shooting bring out the gut-wrenching anger and confusion that it’s happening again. That another parent is losing a child.

“This evening, Michelle and I will do what I know every parent in America will do, which is hug our children a little tighter and we’ll tell them that we love them, and we’ll remind each other how deeply we love one another,” Obama said hours after the Newtown shooting from the White house, wiping back tears.

Speaking at a tearful memorial service days later in Newtown, Obama said a society is judged by how it cares for its children. “We’re not doing enough — and we will have to change.”

After an angry speech in April objecting to a “shameful” Senate vote against a gun control measure, Obama has conceded that nothing is likely to happen on that front
in this Congress. One year later after Newtown, as the Obama and the First Lady lit candles in memory of each of the slain that fateful day, the president’s efforts to tighten gun laws and fix a broken mental health system have gone unfulfilled, and the notes keep coming.