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Mark Zuckerberg and Sheryl Sandberg, top officials of Facebook, told senators this year that the company was making changes.

Trump Embraces a Path To Ease U.S. Sentencing

A Bipartisan Proposal That Would Unwind Tough-on-Crime Rules of Years Past

By NICHOLAS FANDOS and MAGGIE HABERMAN

WASHINGTON — President Trump threw his support behind a substantial revision of the nation's prison and sentencing laws on Wednesday, opening a potential path to enacting the most significant changes to the criminal justice system in a generation.

The tentative legislative package, developed by a bipartisan group of senators and called the First Step Act, builds on a prison overhaul bill already passed overwhelmingly by the House by adding changes that would begin to unwind some of the tough-on-crime federal policies of the 1980s and 1990s that incarcerated African-American offenders at much higher rates than white offenders.

Combining new funding for anti-recidivism programs, the expansion of early-release credits for prisoners and the reduction of certain mandatory minimum sentences, the compromise bill would help shape the experiences of tens of thousands of current inmates and future offenders.

"In many respects, we're getting very much tougher on the truly bad criminals — of which, unfortunately, there are many," said Mr. Trump, flanked by Republican lawmakers and law enforcement officials. "But we're treating people differently for different crimes. Some people got caught up in situations that were very bad."

He urged Congress to promptly send him a final bill to sign. "It's the right thing to do," Mr. Trump

added.

Mr. Trump's support could give political cover to Republicans wary of reducing some hard-line sentencing rules for drug and other offenses, and enable the legislation's sponsors to assemble a coalition of moderate Republicans and Democrats in time to move a bill before the year's end — and before the new, divided Congress is seated.

The changes have attracted a broad and unusual range of supporters, including the billionaire brothers Charles G. and David H. Koch on the right and the American Civil Liberties Union on the left. Conservatives see an opportunity to begin to cut into the high costs of the nation's growing prison population. Liberals have long opposed the current sentencing laws for what they see as having unfairly incarcerated a generation of young men, particularly African-American men, for drug and other nonviolent offenses.

But even with Mr. Trump on board, proponents must now compete with a rapidly closing window to move a complicated bill with broad implications for the criminal justice system. As of Wednesday morning, many senators had not yet even seen a draft of the bill, and some conservatives were thought to be firmly against it. Liberals have their own reasons to be disappointed because most of the proposed sentencing changes have not been made re-

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STRANGE ALLIANCE Not everyone who saw a need for justice reform came to the conclusion by the same path. News Analysis. PAGE A18

Delay, Deny, Deflect: How Facebook Leaders Leaned Out in Crisis

This article is by Sheera Frenkel, Nicholas Confessore, Cecilia Kang, Matthew Rosenberg and Jack Nicas.

Sheryl Sandberg was seething. Inside Facebook's Menlo Park, Calif., headquarters, top executives gathered in the glass-walled conference room of its founder, Mark Zuckerberg. It was September 2017, more than a year after Facebook engineers discovered suspicious Russia-linked activity on its site, an early warning of the Kremlin campaign to disrupt the 2016 American election. Congress-

sional and federal investigators were closing in on evidence that would implicate the company.

But it wasn't the looming disaster at Facebook that angered Ms. Sandberg. It was the social network's security chief, Alex Stamos, who had informed company board members the day before that Facebook had yet to contain the Russian infestation. Mr. Stamos's briefing had prompted a humiliating boardroom interrogation of Ms. Sandberg, Facebook's chief operating officer, and her billionaire boss. She appeared to regard the admission as a betrayal.

A Giant Slow to Face Up to Privacy Breaches and Russian Trolls

"You threw us under the bus!" she yelled at Mr. Stamos, according to people who were present.

The clash that day would set off a reckoning — for Mr. Zuckerberg, for Ms. Sandberg and for the business they had built together. In just over a decade, Facebook has

connected more than 2.2 billion people, a global nation unto itself that reshaped political campaigns, the advertising business and daily life around the world. Along the way, Facebook accumulated one of the largest-ever repositories of personal data, a treasure trove of photos, messages and likes that propelled the company into the Fortune 500.

But as evidence accumulated that Facebook's power could also be exploited to disrupt elections, broadcast viral propaganda and inspire deadly campaigns of hate

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ERIC THAYER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Looking for victims' remains.

U.S. Judge Kills New York Deal To Fix Housing

By LUIS FERRÉ-SADURNÍ and BENJAMIN WEISER

A federal judge rejected a sweeping settlement on Wednesday that would have appointed a monitor to oversee the troubled New York City Housing Authority and required the city to pump at least \$1.2 billion into repairs.

The judge, William H. Pauley III, also strongly suggested that the federal government take over the authority instead.

In a scathing opinion, Judge Pauley deplored the "breath-taking scope" of the squalid living conditions in the city's public housing complexes. He rebuked the city for its mismanagement of the agency and said the federal government had abdicated its legal responsibility to overhaul the nation's largest stock of public housing, home to about 400,000 vulnerable New Yorkers.

The unexpected ruling threw the future of the Housing Authority into doubt and unraveled a deal Mayor Bill de Blasio had staked his reputation on as a champion of public-housing tenants.

It was the latest setback in a year of public housing scandals, including widespread heating failures, the resignation of the authority's chairwoman and revelations about mishandled lead paint inspections.

The judge said he could not ignore the residents' "harrowing accounts" of conditions and the indifference of the management of the Housing Authority, known as Nycha.

But he said the agreement "is not fair, reasonable or consistent with the public interest." He ordered the parties to submit a re-

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ANDREW URWIN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Ramifications of Brexit

Britain's plan to leave the European Union has flower sellers in a bind, Page B1. Above, a market in the Netherlands. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Theresa May got a win on an exit deal, Page A10.

Parsing Signatures, Not Chads, in Florida Vote

This article is by Glenn Thrush, Audra D. S. Burch and Frances Robles.

RIVIERA BEACH, Fla. — The nuns at Zina Rodriguez's Catholic school in the Bronx thwacked her knuckles to punish sloppy handwriting, so she was shocked when her mail-in ballot in Florida was rejected because her signature did not match the one on record with elections officials.

Ms. Rodriguez, a registered Democrat, found the rejection notice in her mailbox at 7 p.m. the night before the Nov. 6 election, two hours after the deadline for

Ballots May Be Tossed Over Trivial Lapses in Penmanship

wanted time to research all the questions. I was fulfilling my responsibility," said Ms. Rodriguez, 47, a behavioral health care consultant from Lake Worth, Fla. "All of that got thrown away because I wanted to get out of the D.M.V. office as fast as I can. It is incredibly upsetting."

The issue of faulty signatures, especially on mail-in ballots, has emerged as a central point of contention in the county-by-county recounts taking place in Florida, with lawsuits spinning off the 2018 election like tornadoes off a hurricane.

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Aides to Prince Behind a Pivot To Intimidation

By BEN HUBBARD and DAVID D. KIRKPATRICK

BEIRUT, Lebanon — When Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman of Saudi Arabia convened an outdoor banquet this spring for his fellow Arab rulers, seated among the kings, princes and presidents were two friends with few qualifications other than their closeness to the young prince himself: a poet who has become known for orchestrating ferocious social media campaigns, and a former security guard who runs the Saudi sports commission.

The two men had each played pivotal roles in many of the brazen power plays that have marked Prince Mohammed's sprint to dominance of the kingdom — the ouster of the previous crown prince, the detentions of royals and businessmen in the Riyadh Ritz-Carlton, the kidnapping of the Lebanese prime minister, and the kingdom's diplomatic spats with Qatar and Canada. Even Saudi royals have come to fear the prince's two friends — Saud el-Qahtani, 40, and Turki al-Sheikh, 37 — and the Arab potentates around the table could scarcely object to their presence.

Now the killing of the Saudi dissident Jamal Khashoggi by Saudi agents has focused attention on their roles as enablers of the crown prince's impulsiveness and aggression, and Saudi watchers consider the men's fate a bellwether of the royal court's direction as it grapples with the international outrage over the killing.

"They are the closest people to the crown prince," said Kristin Smith Diwan, senior resident scholar at the Arab Gulf States In-

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INTERNATIONAL A4-11

Israeli Defense Minister Quits

Avigdor Lieberman said the Netanyahu government was soft on the unrest in Gaza, calling a cease-fire with Hamas a "capitulation to terror." PAGE A8

No Home, Sweet Home

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of Canada lived in the leader's official residence when his father held the office, but the house is unfit to inhabit now. PAGE A4

Tip of Caravan Reaches Border

The first wave of the migrant convoy reached the Mexican border city of Tijuana, setting up a potential clash with American authorities. PAGE A6



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Landlords Helping Brothels

As prostitution moves into residential buildings, landlords play a key role in facilitating the sex trade. PAGE A23

At Long Last, Lucky Numbers

A retired postal worker was a Powerball winner after playing the same numbers weekly for 25 years. PAGE A24

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Choice of Whitaker Is Defended

The Justice Department pushed back against accusations that the appointment of Matthew G. Whitaker as acting attorney general was illegal. PAGE A19

National Book Award Winners

Sigrid Nunez won the National Book Award for fiction with her novel "The Friend." PAGE A22

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Wonder Woman's Justice

G. Willow Wilson, the writer of the comic's new storyline, ponders whether war can ever be just. PAGE C5

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Amazon's Opportunity Zone

The retail giant's new site in Queens, with its wine bars and high-rise buildings, is "distressed" under federal law granting tax breaks. PAGE B1

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At 10-9, deGrom's the Best

Despite a lack of run support, the Mets' Jacob deGrom won the N.L. Cy Young Award in a landslide. Tampa Bay's Blake Snell took the A.L. prize. PAGE B11

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Gail Collins PAGE A29



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Tales From Warhol's Factory

The artist's collaborators look back on the world of movies, paintings and dramas he created. Above, with the actress Viva in 1968. PAGE D1



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