“EVERY BILLIONAIRE IS A POLICY FAILURE” is the Twitter handle for Dan Riffle, a policy adviser to Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez described by the Washington Post as an “avowed foe” of wealthy people. “The idea that Bill Gates is the one guy who should be out there curing malaria is ludicrous to me,” he told Vox. “Why should a guy who has expertise in software and taking maximum advantage of patent laws be the guy in charge of curing malaria? Why should that not be a democratized process where actual experts with actual training in the area democratically decide how to distribute the resources that we have to best fight the battle?”

Well! The fact is, Bill Gates funds lots of “actual experts” in his battle against malaria. Hordes of them are involved, for instance, in his foundation’s current effort to develop mosquito strains featuring few females (who spread the malaria parasite from person to person). But the founder also relies on his entrepreneurial expertise in problem-solving, his independence from vested interests within the medical establishment, and his instincts for innovating and finding fresh paths.

Moreover, the Gates Foundation does lots more than just fight malaria. It has been estimated that its immunization coalition alone has saved the lives of over 13 million people. But polemics don’t have time for details, and Riffle’s donor bashings and claims that philanthropy is an amateur/band-aid/vanity-circus elicit cheers from his enthusiasts—some of whom are paid staffers at philanthropic entities.

GREENPEACE protesters rappelled off a bridge in September in a stunt designed to close part of the Houston Ship Channel for 24 hours in advance of a Democratic Presidential debate. Eleven people dangled from the roadway, blocking one lane of traffic and causing an accident. The protesters have been charged with the felony of “aiding and abetting obstruction of navigable waters.”

IN SEPTEMBER the House Ways and Means Committee held a hearing titled “How the Tax Code Subsidizes Hate.” The overarching question: Can or should the government revoke the 501c3 status of nonprofits that some activists label as hate groups?

UCLA law professor Eugene Volokh argued in his testimony that the government should not get in the business of defining hate groups to yank charitable certifications. “Giving the government the power to discriminate against some such viewpoints necessarily means the government will also have the power to discriminate against others. Would we feel comfortable giving this power to the Trump Administration? If we would, would we feel comfortable giving it to a possible Sanders

LOVERS OF ANTIQUITIES got good news from the Getty Trust of Los Angeles. Getty is expanding its conservation work beyond Greek and Roman cultures with a $100 million gift to support preservation in other regions, including Kurdistan—where local archaeologists and conservators will be trained to protect the region’s remaining ancient treasures, many of which were destroyed by ISIS to international horror.
AFP and ACLU Sue New Jersey

Another unlikely coalition is fighting a law aimed at requiring donor-funded groups to disclose the identities of supporters. In a harbinger of similar demands on 501c3 charities, New Jersey in 2017 required 501c4 and 527 groups to publish the identities of all individuals who give $300 or more at a fundraising event, and all persons who contribute $10,000 or more in annual support. Governor Phil Murphy vetoed the bill on the grounds that it appeared to be unconstitutional. But faced with political machinations, Murphy later signed a nearly identical statute, while admitting “I remain concerned that various apparent drafting errors in the bill may invite confusion among filers and could spawn time-consuming litigation.”

That litigation arrived on cue. Americans for Prosperity asked for an injunction, saying “this is really about political feuding, political revenge.” If the legislature was serious about disclosure it would include trade associations and unions in the parties required to file. The American Civil Liberties Union also filed suit claiming that “S.150 violates the associational and expressive rights of plaintiffs and their supporters, and chills the exercise thereof.” A U.S. District judge has issued a preliminary injunction preventing New Jersey from enforcing the law until the litigation is resolved.

A major grant for the film was provided by the Capital Research Center, which has produced its own series of pointed short videos about college radicalism today, under the leadership of Philanthropy Roundtable alum Scott Walter—author of a review essay on another topic in this issue of Philanthropy (page 40).

Anonymous Gifts

Anonymous gifts have poured forth in recent months. Here’s a sample just from those arriving at academic institutions:

A $10 million anonymous donation bolstered the Morehead-Cain Scholarship at the University of North Carolina. A $25 million nameless grant arrived at the same school to reduce financial burdens on graduate students. To expand opportunities for non-traditional students and make the whole school more affordable, an unknown donor bestowed $76 million on Gordon College in October. $50 million was quietly given to the University of Houston by someone who wants to improve the faculty. An unnamed giver sent the University of Chicago $35 million to support financial aid for top international students. A neurological institute to help sick youngsters at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles received a $25 million anonymous gift. And it was reported for the first time that the source of $400 million in anonymous gifts to the University of Southern California over a period of years was an 85-year-old son of a sharecropper turned businessman. In a typical year, about 10 percent of all donations over a million dollars are anonymous.

With the Support of Kickstarter Donors, the Marshall Project publishes first-person stories from incarcerated people. This summer there was a story by Virginia inmate Jesse Crosson, who wrote about what work in prison means to him while he serves a 32-year sentence. His dad, he says, taught him to work with his hands. “I internalized that a man should be able to put on a suit and tie but also get his hands dirty. I always thought I would be a professional who built decks and rebuilt engines on the weekends.” But Crosson started smoking pot and then graduated to cocaine and crime to support his habit.

The practical message from his essay is the deep importance work holds for him and other inmates. Over 16 years in various prison workshops, Crosson says, “I’ve had about every job imaginable.” He describes learning on the spot, working...
Review in Brief

Evolution of a Mega-donor

If you read contemporary books, you've noticed we're in an era of memoir. With every editor looking for the next *Hillbilly Elegy*, we've been swarmed with first-person narratives. This includes a personal history recently released by Melinda Gates. I came to *The Moment of Lift* fearing it would be very obviously written by a ghostwriter. But if a hired gun did assemble this prose, he or she is pretty good. The book is heavily focused on gender politics, and includes all the predictable progressive positioning on that not-very-fresh topic. Where Gates gets more interesting is in her willingness to tell the reader how she began her thinking, how it shifted as she became an active philanthropist, where she made mistakes, and what changed her mind. There is a good deal of earnest wrestling in the book. For instance, despite her high-profile activism on behalf of contraception, she refuses to give up on her Catholicism.

Gates lays out a flow of examples on how she found her way as a donor. Many of us freeze our most deeply held beliefs, or at least pretend they never change. Gates admits to lots of evolving, some mistakes, and some growth. She is more honest than most memoirists. She transforms from a woman who won't give a public speech if Bill is in the room to someone willing to make controversial claims, and disclose marital tensions, in print. There are lessons here that other donors might learn from, like "If I didn't fill my schedule with things I felt were important, other people would fill my schedule with things they felt were important."

There will be little excuse if future employees of the Gates Foundation claim not to know Melinda Gates's donor intent. She includes doubts but ultimately lays out clear lines. And her story is leavened with some humility. She admits to "worrying about my philanthropy right."

That's a useful quality in any donor.

—Ashley May

How Many Nonprofits Did Any Lobbying in 2018?

- 3%

Source: National Council of Nonprofits
before selling the parcel to the U.S. Forest Service. The nonprofit has been negotiating this sale for 20 years. It is described by the League’s Becky Bremser as “the most significant sequoia conservation opportunity in the last 75 years.”

**CHILDREN NEEDING FOSTER CARE** after a breakdown in their own families are once again a rising population. This follows many years of historic effort by churches, nonprofits, and public agencies to push those numbers down. The body of youngsters needing a substitute family at some point in a given year has now risen to about 700,000.

More than any other group of Americans, practicing Christians have tried to fill this gap. Christians are three times more likely to consider fostering, and two and a half times likelier to permanently adopt a younger in need of a home. Families recruited through houses of worship end up fostering for close to three years longer than other foster families.

So why are government agencies now making it harder for religiously motivated families to foster? In recent years, Massachusetts, Illinois, New York, Michigan, and other states have banned or discouraged faith-based partnerships, often in response to complaints that some religious groups will not place children with same-sex couples. Massachusetts and Illinois have each lost around 2,000 foster families since taking their actions. The Becket Fund, one of the groups trying to protect the participation of families of faith in government foster-care systems, scored a big victory in Michigan in September. A federal court ruled that “the State’s real goal is not to promote non-discriminatory child placements, but to stamp out St. Vincent’s religious belief and replace it with the State’s own.” In November, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services got involved by proposing to roll back an Obama-era decree that threatened to deny HHS funding to many religious organizations providing foster-care services.

**Future leads for The Exchange to:** editor@PhilanthropyRoundtable.org

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**Big Idea**

**Lynch Foundation Entrepreneurial Spirit in Education Prize**

The Philanthropy Roundtable is proud to announce the annual Lynch Foundation Entrepreneurial Spirit in Education Prize. The Lynch Prize, endowed by the Lynch Foundation and named in its honor, will recognize a donor who has made a catalyzing investment with a high-quality impact on K-12 education. This prize will reward and spotlight donors who take calculated risks to advance new educational interventions. The Lynch Foundation was created in 1988 by Peter Lynch and his late wife Carolyn, of Boston, Massachusetts.

Successful donors have frequently adopted an entrepreneurial mindset to re-envision factors like school design, teacher and leadership development, and new learning models. This prize will recognize those who provide the spark for imaginative reforms in the future.

All types of education philanthropists are eligible—individuals, families, foundations, or corporations. The award recognizes contributions for a focused project, not a general approach or portfolio of donations. To make the prize attainable by smaller donors the value of the philanthropic investment cannot total more than $5 million over a period of five years. Political or 501c4 giving may be a part of the investment, but there must be a central 501c3 component. In-kind-only investments will not qualify.

To nominate a donor for this $50,000 prize, complete the online submission form available on the Roundtable website and e-mail to PBurke@PhilanthropyRoundtable.org. The last day of nominations for the initial Lynch Prize will be January 15, 2020. The selection committee will review all candidates and select a winner in March. The first prize will be awarded by members of the Lynch family at the Roundtable’s 2020 National Forum on K-12 Philanthropy, held April 29-30 in San Antonio, Texas.

**ROUNDTABLE GATHERINGS**

Perhaps we’ll see you at one of these upcoming Philanthropy Roundtable events!

**April 29-30: 2020**

**National Forum on K-12 Philanthropy, San Antonio, Texas**

**May 6-7:**

**National Civics Expo, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

**May 13:**

**How Donors Can Improve Veterans Service Organizations, Washington, D.C.**

**October 14-16: 2020**

**Annual Meeting in Naples, Florida**

For information on Philanthropy Roundtable events, and to register, go to PhilanthropyRoundtable.org or call 202-822-8333.