Justice Update: Monday, June 28

- **Infrastructure:** The most likely path to a bipartisan infrastructure package looks to be the INVEST in America Act on the House floor this week and then amending it in the Senate to bring it in line with the bipartisan outline. The bill is focused almost exclusively on traditional infrastructure (roads, bridges, tunnels) and doesn't include the needed investments in childcare, education, housing.

- **Reconciliation**: The President has said that the passage of the bipartisan infrastructure bill is linked to passage of a reconciliation bill that includes more progressive priorities and he will not sign one without the other. There is no update on when budget reconciliation might happen, or how much of the progressive agenda will be included in the package, but as of now Moderate Democrats are pressing Senate Budget Chair Bernie Sanders and House Budget Chair John Yarmuth go significantly lower than the $6 trillion that progressives are pushing for.

- **Voting Rights**: Last week there was a key test vote on S.1 the For the People Act. Senate Republicans blocked consideration on proceeding to consideration of the bill. The UCC officers offered a statement of support for the bill. This was the first in a series of efforts over the summer.

- **Police Reform**: It appears there might be a bipartisan agreement on police reform. Details are unclear and the debate over qualified Immunity will likely be one of the significant sticking points.

- **January 6 Commission**: House Democrats are moving forward with a commission to examine the events of Jan. 6; and while not required the Speaker has said she may appoint a Republican among her appointments to the new select committee.

- **Migrant Youth:** Reports from at a facility for migrant youth at Ft. Bliss Texas are heartbreaking and show that many are living with unsanitary and unsafe conditions. HHS Secretary Becerra who oversees the Offices of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) said Congress needs to act, which doesn't address the immediate issue of children who are in the care of the U.S. not receiving proper care.

- **Iraq and Syria:** President Joe Biden ordered U.S. airstrikes along the Iraq-Syria border on Sunday evening on suspected "hubs" being used by Iran-backed militants to launch armed drones. These strikes are the second against Iran-backed militias since U.S. President Joe Biden took office. In a rare rebuke, Iraq's military spokesman has condemned the strikes as a violation of Iraq's sovereignty. The strikes and growing tension with Iran is likely to slow negotiations to revive the 2015 nuclear deal.

- **Global COVID-19 Assistance:** While the U.S. nears 50% vaccination rate, globally only 10% of the world has been vaccinated highlighting the ongoing need to support global vaccinations. Last week in an important step, the Biden administration's OFAC office (Office of Foreign Assets Control) issued three pandemic related general licenses for Iran, Venezuela, and Syria which will help get important COVID-related medical supplies into these countries that the U.S. has had sanctions on which have limited transactions and delivery of aid into these countries.

- **Palestine and Israel:** Last week, the UN accused Israel of flagrantly violating international law by continuing to expand settlements in the West Bank and east Jerusalem. "I again underscore, in no uncertain terms, that Israeli settlements constitute a flagrant violation of United Nations resolutions and international law," the U.N. envoy said. "They are a major obstacle to the achievement of a two-state solution and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace."

- **AUMF:** Last Thursday, Sen. Bob Menendez (D-NJ) postponed a vote on Sen. Tim Kaine's (D-VA) AUMF repeal bill until at least mid-July to hold a members only briefing on the impact of the repeal.

- **UN Report:** The UN High Commissioner on Human Rights' report on systemic racism and police violence against people of African descent was finally released and calls for an end of 'impunity' for police violence against black people. "The UN human rights office analysis of 190 deaths across the world led to the report's damning conclusion that law enforcement officers are rarely held accountable for killing Black people due in part to deficient investigations and an unwillingness to acknowledge the impact of structural racism…"

- **Democratic Republic of the Congo :** A curfew has been imposed in the city of Beni following three bombs explosions over the weekend. The Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) rebel group, which has been responsible for escalating violence over the past 18 months, has taken responsibility. One of the explosions was inside a Catholic church and officials have warning that more attacks are being planned.