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Spotlight on House-Passed Bills

Speaker Ryan's First 12 Months Produce Mixed Legislative Results

By **Richard G. Thomas**

Voterama in Congress

During his first 12 months as House speaker, Rep. Paul Ryan delivered legislative results that reflect some mainstream Republican priorities but fall far short of the wide-ranging policy manifesto he is promoting as a rationale for voters to support GOP congressional candidates on Nov. 8.

The document, "A Better Way," lays out a vision of GOP governance starting as early as 2017, as well as a platform for the 2020 presidential bid many expect Ryan, a nine-term Wisconsin congressman, to mount if Democrat Hillary Rodham Clinton is elected this year. But amid rising public distrust of the veracity of career politicians, it also invites comparisons between Ryan's words and deeds since he was elected as speaker on Oct. 29, 2015. On that score, his accomplishments are limited.

The House has voted approval of 90 major bills on Ryan's watch, all sponsored by Republicans because they are the chamber's majority party. These bills generally cater to the party's business wing and donor class, while producing few if any accomplishments for fiscal conservatives wary of debt, tea-partiers who want a replacement health law and Trumpites in step with their presidential candidate's stands on trade and immigration.

Thirty-five of the measures, or nearly 40 percent, seek to repeal or block financial and environmental regulations and other federal rules seen as drags on economic growth and personal freedoms by interest groups such as the Chamber of Commerce and mega-donors including Charles and David Koch.

In part, the deregulatory blitz has targeted the Securities and Exchange Commission, Environmental Protection Agency and Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, along with administration policies for overseeing Wall Street, enforcing environmental laws, addressing climate change and shifting energy production from fossil to renewable fuels.

But fiscal reformers watched in vain as the speaker, hemmed in by the hard-right Freedom Caucus, failed in the past 12 months to bring to the House floor a congressional budget resolution or any other measure that would slow the growth of federal debt, overhaul the tax code or take a stab at Medicare, Social Security, Medicaid and other entitlement programs.

To the contrary, the House under Ryan voted to expand Medicare and Medicaid in order to fund programs for the mentally ill, and passed bills that would increase deficits by \$622 billion over 10 years by permanently extending tax breaks for businesses, families and others; \$32.7 billion over 10 years by enlarging deductions for unreimbursed medical expenses and \$1 billion over 10 years by changing rules governing employee stock options.

The speaker's office did not respond to requests for comment on this story.

In addition to the 35 deregulation measures, the Ryan-passed agenda was led by eight health bills (mainly concerning opioid-heroin addiction and the Affordable Care Act); eight massive budget bills to fund agencies; six attempts to roll back the Iran nuclear deal and four legislative assaults on the Internal Revenue Service and its civil servants. Numerous subject areas recorded two passed bills, while several others – including immigration, trade, infrastructure and abortion – were substantially the focus of only one House-passed measure on Ryan's watch.

The following document lists all measures passed by the Republican-led House since the speaker's swearing-in Oct. 29, 2015, except for non-controversial bills from the Suspension Calendar. Asterisks mark the deregulation bills. The four bills passed under Ryan that cut taxes while expanding deficits are marked by roll numbers 703 and 705 in 2015 and 502 and 544 in 2016.

Roll #	Bill #	
November 2015		
623	HR 22	To Pass 3-Year Highway, Transit Bill
633	HR 511	To Repeal Collective Bargaining at Tribal Casinos
636	HR 1210*	To Deter Consumers' Home-Mortgage Lawsuits
637	HR 1737*	To Block Consumer Financial Protection Bureau Scrutiny of Auto Lending
641	HR 3189	To Authorize Congressional Audit of Federal Reserve
643	HR 4038	To Expand Screening of Syrian Refugees
December 2015		
649	HR 4127	To Authorize FY 2017 Intelligence Budget
650	SJ Res 24*	To Kill EPA Rule on Carbon Emissions
651	SJ Res 23*	To Kill EPA Rule on Greenhouse Gas Emissions
665	S 1177	To Renew K-12 Education Programs
672	HR 8	To Pass GOP-Drafted Overhaul of Energy Programs
686	HR 2130	To Pass Texas-Oklahoma Land Bill
693	HR 644	To Change Trade Laws, Including Ban on Climate Provisions
703	HR 2029	To Approve Tax Breaks Adding \$622 Billion to Deficits Over 10 Years
705	HR 2029	To Approve \$1.15 Trillion Spending Bill That Included \$622 Billion Tax Breaks
January 2016		
6	HR 3762	To Repeal Affordable Care Act
12	HR 712*	To Deter Consent Decrees Leading to New Regulations
20	HR 1155*	To Establish Commission for Reviewing Regulations
33	HR 1927	To Limit Federal Class Action Lawsuits
42	HR 1644*	To Shelve Rule Against Mountaintop-Removal Mining
45	SJ Res 22*	To Block EPA Headwaters Regulation

Roll #	Bill #	
		February 2016
52	HR 3700	To Update Federal Housing Programs
54	HR 3662	To Roll Back Iran Nuclear Deal
61	HR 1675*	To Require Top-to-Bottom SEC Rules Review
63	HR 766*	To Prohibit Prosecutorial Abuse in a Certain Justice Department Bank-Fraud Operation
70	HR 3293	To Provide Congressional Review of Scientific-Research Grants
76	HR 3442	To Require Treasury Department Report on Federal Debt
81	HR 2017*	To Weaken Menu-Labeling Rules
89	HR 3624	To Shift Lawsuits from Federal to State Courts
101	HR 2406*	To Expand Hunting, Fishing on Federal Land
		March 2016
105	HR 3716	To Banish Unqualified Medicaid Providers
109	HR 4557*	To Kill EPA Rule on Brick Kiln Emissions
123	HR 3797*	To Kill EPA Rule on Coal Refuse Emissions
124	HR 4596*	To Delay FCC Broadband Transparency Rules
129	H Res 369	To File House Brief Against Presidential Immigration Orders
137	HR 2745*	To Limit FTC Scrutiny of Proposed Corporate Mergers
		April 2016
146	HR 3340*	To Exert Congressional Control Over Financial Oversight
149	HR 3791*	To Ease Debt-Equity Rules for Community Banks
152	HR 2666*	To Prohibit FCC Enforcement of "Net Neutrality" Steps
160	HR 1206	To Link IRS Hiring Freeze to Staffers' Personal Tax Delinquency
161	HR 4885	To Deposit IRS User Fees in Treasury's General Fund
162	HR 4890	To Prohibit IRS Staff Bonuses
163	HR 3724	To Bar Rehiring Fired IRS Employees
171	HR 4998*	To Expand Start-Ups' Access to Angel Investors
176	HJ Res 88*	To Kill Fiduciary Standards for Investment Advisers
179	HR 4901	To Renew D.C. School Voucher Program
		May 2016
184	HR 4641	To Create Task Force On Opioid-Heroin Abuse, Pain Control
187	HR 5046	To Authorize \$103 Million to Address Opioid-Heroin Crisis
193	S 524	To Authorize \$312 Million to Address Opioid-Heroin Crisis
207	HR 5243	To Authorize \$622 Million to Address Zika Virus
216	HR 4909	To Authorize \$610 Billion Military Budget for FY 2017
228	HR 4974	To Appropriate Funds for Veterans' Programs in FY 2017
237	HR 897*	To Scale Back EPA Pesticide Regulation
238	HR 2576	To Revamp Toxic Substances Law
248	HR 5233	To Exert Congressional Control Over Entire D.C. Budget
250	S 2012*	To Pass Bill for Energy Development, Environmental Deregulation

Roll #	Bill #	
June 2016		
282	HR 4775*	To Delay Deadline for States to Submit Ozone Plans
288	HR 5278	To Create Board to Restructure Puerto Rico's Debt
294	HR 5325	To Appropriate \$3.48 Billion FY 2017 Legislative Branch Budget
295	H Con Res 89*	To Express Sense of Congress Against Tax on Carbon Emissions
296	H Con Res 112*	To Express Sense of Congress Against Per-Barrel Tax on Oil
303	HR 5053*	To Reduce IRS Scrutiny of 501c(4) Campaign-Finance Activity
332	HR 5293	To Appropriate \$576 Billion Military Budget for FY 2017
July 2016		
351	HR 1270	To Allow Use of Health Savings Accounts to Buy Over-the-Counter Drugs
376	HR 4361	To Better Secure Federal Information Systems
398	HR 5485	To Appropriate \$10.9 Billion for IRS, \$7 Billion for Federal Judiciary in FY 2017
399	S 524	To Approve Conference Report on Bill Addressing Opioid-Heroin Crisis
416	HR 4768*	To Expand Court Authority Over Executive-Branch Regulations
441	HR 5119	To Deny Funds for Heavy-Water Purchases From Iran in Nuclear Deal
443	S 304	To Establish Right to File Civil Lawsuits to Uphold Conscience-Based Objections to Abortion
466	S 764	To Require Retail Food Labels to List Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs)
467	HR 5631	To Expand U.S. Economic Sanctions on Iran
477	HR 5538	To Appropriate Fiscal 2017 Budgets for Interior Department, EPA, Other Agencies
478	HR 4992	To Limit Funds Transfers Between U.S. Financial Institutions and Iran
August 2016 House not in session.		
September 2016		
488	HR 5063*	To Restrict How Federal Officials Use Funds From Legal Settlements
493	HR 2357*	To Ease SEC Rules on Emerging Firms' Stock Offerings
495	HR 5424*	To Exempt Investment Advisers from SEC Advertising Rules
502	HR 3590	To Expand Medical Deductions, Add \$32.7 Billion to Deficits Over 10 Years
510	HR 5226*	To Set New Requirements for Regulations Proposed by Federal Agencies
519	HR 5620	To Reduce Civil Service Job Protections at Department of Veterans Affairs
520	HR 5351	To Prohibit Detainee Transfers from Guantanamo Bay Military Prison
535	HR 3438*	To Allow Courts to Indefinitely Freeze Rules With \$1 Billion-Plus Cost to Economy
536	HR 5461	To Require Treasury Reports to Congress on Iranian Leaders' Financial Assets
544	HR 5719*	To Allow 7-Year Deferral of Income-Tax Payments on Employee Stock Options
554	HR 5931	To Censure Administration Over Its Payments to Settle Decades-Old Iranian Claims
563	HR 954	To Waive Affordable Care Act Individual Mandate for Some Who Have Lost ACA Coverage
564	S 2040	To Override Presidential Veto of Bill Allowing 9/11 Families to Sue Saudi Arabia
572	HR 5303	To Authorize \$5 Billion-Plus for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Water Projects
573	HR 5325	To Approve Stopgap Budget Lasting Through Dec. 9, 2016.
574	HR 6094*	To Kill Department of Labor Rule Expanding Eligibility for Overtime Pay
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(The House conducted no record votes between Sept. 29, 2016, and Nov. 14, 2016)		