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Top Votes of 115th Congress

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Republican leaders in Congress have chosen to stick to their own business during Donald Trump's turbulent presidency, usually declining to comment on his daily fireworks while passing long-sought GOP bills and confirming dozens of conservative federal judges in the fleeting time that their party controls all levers of power in Washington.

By giving the president virtually free rein as long as he signs their bills into law, and by shrugging off Trump's Tweets and provocations, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and House Speaker Paul Ryan have achieved policy wins that seemed unimaginable to GOP donors and party regulars until the moment of Trump's unlikely election two years ago.

Heading into next month's mid-terms, McConnell and Ryan point to new laws in areas from tax cuts to financial deregulation and a rightward-turning federal judiciary to bolster their case that voters should keep the Senate and House in GOP hands in the 116th Congress. "Today, our country is turning the corner," Ryan recently told reporters.

But Democrats hope to make congressional Republicans' pay a price Nov. 6 for having unflinchingly embraced a president who, they say, has shattered the post-World War II Western alliance, aligned America with Vladimir Putin's Russia over its own intelligence agencies and conducted the nation's highest office in a way that obliterates traditional bipartisan norms of ethics and truthfulness in American governance.

"We must do what the supine Republican Congress has failed to do over the past two years: restore Congress as an equal branch and check the ambition of an imperial and erratic president," Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Calif., said in a Washington Post column, listing Trump's use of the presidency for personal profit and his interference in the work of special counsel Robert Mueller III among topics Democrats will investigate if they assume control of the House next year, gaining subpoena power and a bully pulpit.

This report puts a spotlight on 20 of the most newsworthy votes conducted during the 115th Congress, divided almost evenly between GOP- and Democratic-sponsored measures or nominees.

Two of the featured roll calls (Votes #12 and #18) show constituents how their senators voted on America's expanding military support of Saudi Arabia, an issue that jumped back into the headlines when Turkish officials said Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi was tortured and killed at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul on or about Oct. 2.

Leaders of both parties have called for punitive measures against the oil kingdom, which would be a reversal of U.S. policy toward a nation Trump has courted as one of America's closest allies.

Another (Vote #1) foreshadows an issue that could also return to prominence—disclosure of Trump's federal tax returns before he became president. Republicans blocked a bid by Democrats for disclosure under a law authorizing the Ways and Means Committee to obtain the returns and share a summary with the full House and therefore the public. Democrats vow another disclosure effort if they regain control of the House.

In addition, the top votes include ones on Republican bills to cut business and personal taxes; repeal the Affordable Care Act; roll back Dodd-Frank financial oversight; toughen immigration laws; federalize concealed-carry gun laws; audit special counsel Robert Mueller III; nullify a pro-consumer rule on class-action law suits and confirm two Supreme Court nominees.

The listing also covers Democratic measures to study the link between climate change and national security; update the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force; restore \$473 billion in planned Medicare cuts and block the sale of what critics call "junk insurance" medical coverage that fails to guarantee coverage of pre-existing conditions.

Here are summaries of the issues:

In the House

1. Disclosure of Trump Taxes: Voting 223-183, the House on March 15, 2017, blocked a Democratic bid to force consideration of a resolution aimed at disclosure of President Trump's tax returns. The measure would direct the Ways and Means Committee to use its authority under law to obtain copies of Trump's 2006-2015 returns from the Treasury, privately review the documents and report a summary of information to the full House. A yes vote opposed disclosure of Trump's tax returns. [Roll Call 161](#)

2. GOP Healthcare Repeal: Voting 217-213, the House on May 4, 2017, passed a Republican bill (HR 1628) that would dismantle the Affordable Care Act on terms that could free states from most ACA requirements, including coverage of pre-existing conditions, while reducing Medicaid spending by 25 percent and cutting taxes for upper-income individuals and health-related companies by at least \$880 billion over 10 years. A yes vote was to dismantle the 2010 health law. [Roll Call 256](#)

In the Senate

11. Confirming Justice Gorsuch: Voting 54-45, the Senate on April 7, 2017, confirmed Judge Neil M. Gorsuch, 49, of the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, as the 113th Supreme Court justice. A yes vote was to confirm Gorsuch. [Roll Call 111](#)

12. Arms Sale to Saudi Arabia: Voting 47-53, the Senate on June 13, 2017, turned back a measure (SJ Res 42) that would block an administration plan to sell Saudi Arabia \$500 million in laser-guided bombs and related weaponry for its war against Iranian-backed forces in Yemen. The package is part of a proposed \$110 billion U.S. weapons sale to the Saudis. A yes vote was to block the arms sale. [Roll Call 143](#)

13. GOP Healthcare Repeal: Voting 49-51, the Senate on July 28, 2017, defeated a GOP-sponsored measure to dismantle the Affordable Care Act, thus ending or pausing Republicans' years-long legislative campaign to take down the 2010 law. In part, the bill (HR 1628) would allow states to waive most ACA requirements, including coverage of pre-

In the House

3. Repeal of Dodd-Frank Financial

Oversight: The House on June 8, 2017, voted, 233-186, to repeal key parts of the 2010 Dodd-Frank financial-oversight law while stripping the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau of much of its authority. A yes vote was to send HR 10 to the Senate. [Roll Call 299](#)

4. Climate Change, National Security:

Voting 185-234, the House on July 13, 2017, refused to strip the fiscal 2018 defense policy bill of a requirement that the Department of Defense report periodically on the national security impact of climate change. A yes vote was in opposition to including climate-change provisions in HR 2810. [Roll Call 368](#)

5. Concealed Handguns, States' Rights:

Voting 231-198, the House on Dec. 6, 2017, passed a bill that would federalize the patchwork of state laws on the concealed carrying of loaded handguns. States would have to honor every other state's concealed-carry permit regardless of differences in safety standards. A yes vote was to send HR 38 to the Senate. [Roll Call 663](#)

6. Republican Tax Overhaul: Voting 227-203, the House on Dec. 19, 2017, passed a GOP-drafted bill (HR 1) that would permanently reduce the top corporate tax rate from 35 percent to 21 percent, temporarily lower personal income tax rates for most Americans, permanently cut the inheritance tax and, repeal the 2010 health law's individual mandate. The bill would add at least \$1 trillion to federal debt over 10 years. A yes vote was to send the bill to President Trump. [Roll Call 692](#)

7. Low-Yield Nuclear Weapons: Voting 188-226, the House on May 23, 2018, refused to restrict development of a low-yield nuclear weapon—the W76-2 warhead—that would be mounted on submarine-launched Trident ballistic missiles. Military planners say low-yield, or tactical, warheads are for use in limited conflicts, in contrast to strategic nuclear weapons designed for far-away targets and to destroy nations. Critics say deployment of low-yield warheads would heighten the risk of Armageddon because it is folly to think nuclear war can be waged

In the Senate

existing conditions, while cutting taxes for upper-income individuals and health-related companies by at least \$600 billion over 10 years. A yes vote was to dismantle the law known as Obamacare. [Roll Call 179](#)

14. 9/11 War Resolution: Voting 61-36, the Senate on Sept. 13, 2017, tabled a bid to repeal in six months the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force and the 2002 Iraq war resolution and replace them with fresh legal authority for America's ongoing military actions in Afghanistan, the Middle East and Africa. A yes vote was in opposition to updating the 16-year-old war authority. (HR 2810) [Roll Call 195](#)

15. Restoring \$473 Billion for Medicare:

Voting 47-51, the Senate on Oct. 18, 2017, rejected a Democratic attempt to cancel \$473 billion in Medicare spending reductions endorsed by Republicans in a proposed scaling back of entitlement programs in fiscal years 2018-2027. This occurred during debate on a GOP-drafted budget plan (H Con Res 71). A yes vote was to avert proposed Medicare cuts. [Roll Call 222](#)

16. Consumer Rule on Class-Action

Lawsuits: The Senate on Oct. 24, 2017, nullified a Consumer Financial Protection Bureau rule that would enable individuals to file class-action lawsuits against retail financial firms including credit card issuers and payday lenders. The tally was 51-50 with Vice President Mike Pence casting the deciding vote. Scheduled to take effect in March 2018, the rule would have prohibited the use of arbitration clauses to bar customers from joining class-action lawsuits. A yes vote was to nullify the rule. (HJ Res 111) [Roll Call 249](#)

17. Republican Tax Overhaul: Voting 51-48, the Senate on Dec. 20, 2017, passed a GOP-drafted bill (HR 1) that would reduce business and personal taxes by about \$1.5 trillion through fiscal 2027 while adding more than \$1 trillion to the \$20.6 trillion national debt over 10 years. A yes vote was to pass the bill. [Roll Call 323](#)

18. Military Aid to Saudis in Yemen:

Voting 55-44, the Senate on March 20, 2018, tabled (killed) a measure (SJ Res 54) that would bar U.S. military operations in Yemen

In the House

on a controlled basis. A yes vote was to curb funding in the 2019 military budget (HR 5515) for developing low-yield nuclear weapons. [Roll Call 222](#)

8. Congressional Audit of Robert

Mueller: Voting 207-201, the House on June 8, 2018, required the Government Accountability Office, an arm of Congress, to conduct audits of the office of special counsel Robert S. Mueller III in its probe of possible ties between Russians and candidate Donald Trump. A yes vote  to add the requirement to a fiscal 2019 appropriations bill (HR 5895). [Roll Call 254](#)

9. Trump-Backed Immigration Bill: The House on June 27, 2018, defeated, 121-301, a GOP-sponsored bill backed by President Trump that would provide \$25 billion over five years for security measures including a wall on the border with Mexico. The bill also would offer a path to legal status to the undocumented immigrants known as dreamers. A yes vote was to pass HR 6136. [Roll Call 297](#)

10. Election Funds for States: Voting 182-232, the House on July 19, 2018, defeated a Democratic motion to appropriate \$380 million in HR 6147 for state and local programs to fortify electoral systems against cyber-attacks from foes including Russia. At least 40 states use outdated voting machines and 13 employ machines that fail to generate paper backups to electronic files. A yes vote was to provide election-security grants to states in fiscal 2019. [Roll Call 364](#)

In the Senate

unless they were authorized by Congress under the 1976 War Powers Act. The resolution addressed aerial refueling and targeting assistance in support of Saudi air attacks on Iran-backed Houthi forces there. A yes vote was in opposition to requiring congressional approval of U.S. military aid to Saudi Arabia in Yemen. [Roll Call 58](#)

19. Confirming Justice Kavanaugh:

Voting 50-48, the Senate on Oct. 6, 2018, confirmed Judge Brett M. Kavanaugh, 53, of the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, as the 114th Supreme Court Justice. A yes vote was to confirm Kavanaugh. [Roll Call 223](#)

20. Trump Insurance, Pre-Existing

Conditions: Voting 50-50, the Senate on Oct. 10, 2018, affirmed a Trump administration rule authorizing the sale of "short-term, limited-duration" health insurance in the individual market as an alternative to Affordable Care Act coverage. Such policies cost far less because they omit the ACA's required "essential health benefits," including coverage of consumers with pre-existing conditions. This occurred during debate on SJ Res 63. A yes vote was to nullify the Trump insurance rule. [Roll Call 226](#)