



2020 Year-End Report 116th Congress, 2nd Session

The 116th Congress was marked by the Trump Administration's second term and the Coronavirus Pandemic. In the 2018 midterms, Republicans lost the House of Representatives, a reaction against Trump's effectiveness at implementing his conservative agenda, but managed to hold on to the Senate majority, which was able to prevent the radical House from advancing its legislation to the President's desk.

Congressional Leadership

In the 116th, the House swung radically left with career Democrats butting heads against young progressives and socialists, or the "squad." This group consisted of freshman members Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (NY), Ilhan Omar (MN), Ayanna Pressley (MA), and Rashida Tlaib (MI).

Even with a more radicalized majority and several dissenting votes, Nancy Pelosi won election as House Speaker in both the first and second session of the 116th. In both sessions, Pelosi was adamantly anti-Trump and the House's agenda followed that attitude. Rather than work alongside the Senate, Pelosi used her chamber to attempt to discredit the President. Majority Leader Mitch McConnell did not often consider the House's legislation.

Despite conservative efforts in the House to elect Rep. Jim Jordan (R-OH) to the position of House Minority Leader, Republicans ultimately chose Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) to serve in that position. Although he has not voted consistently with Eagle Forum's values in the past, he worked closely with the Freedom Caucus and was willing to unite Republicans against harmful legislation from Democrats.

Impeachment

On December 18, 2019, the House impeached President Trump for abuse of power and obstruction of Congress. House impeachment hearings were markedly biased with Democratic Chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Adam Schiff (CA) refusing to let the Republican members to ask questions and invite their own witnesses. The vote fell along party lines with 229 ayes, 198 nays, and 1 present vote. Three Democrats joined Republicans in voting

against the measure. These included Congressman Collin Peterson (MN), Jefferson Van Drew (NJ), who switched to the Republican party in December 2019, and Jared Golden (ME). Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard (HI) voted present.

The Senate then held impeachment hearings and on February 5, 2020 the Senate acquitted President Trump. Senator Mitt Romney (R-UT) split with Republicans and voted in favor of Article I: Abuse of Power.

Immigration

In February, the House passed the *Farm Workforce Modernization Act* ([H.R. 5038](#)) which included [sweeping amnesty](#) provisions. The vote passed mostly along party lines [260-165](#). Those provisions would allow illegal aliens to obtain work permits and pathways to citizenship if they held part-time jobs. It would also add a new category to the H-2A visa program allowing an additional 20,000 non-seasonal immigrants to be employed. Fortunately, the Senate did not take up the measure.

That Summer, House Democrats were considering two measures that would undermine President Trump's immigration agenda. The first, the *No Ban Act* ([H.R. 2214](#)), would have repealed the 2017 immigration ban that President Trump enacted and the Supreme Court upheld. The second measure, the *Access to Counsel Act* (H.R. [H.R. 5581](#)), would allow every immigrant crossing the United States border to obtain legal representation paid for by American citizens. This would further jam up the lines at the border and line the pockets of lawyers with cash.

Eagle Forum sent alerts to grassroots activists and score letters to Congress against these measures. Speaker Pelosi originally added these two bills into an appropriations bill but ultimately stripped them out due to disagreements among Democrats.

Life

House Republicans made many attempts to follow the example of President Trump in enacting pro-life policies. In February 2019, Representative Ann Wagner (R-MO) introduced the [Born-Alive Survivors Protection Act](#) (H.R. 962). The bill, which had 193 cosponsors, including 3 Democrats, requires medical personnel to perform life-saving measures on infants born-alive after a failed abortion attempt. If attempts to save the infants life are not taken, medical professionals face legal consequences. Sadly, Speaker Pelosi refused to bring Born-Alive to the House Floor for consideration.

In response, Republican members asked for unanimous consent, or a simple up or down vote, for H.R. 962 on the House Floor almost every legislative day. To add to that, Minority Whip Steve Scalise (R-LA) introduced a petition to discharge the legislation on April 2, 2019. The petition would circumvent Leadership and force a vote once signed by a majority or 218 members of the House. [205](#) Members lent their name to the discharge petition. 218 were needed to force the vote.

The Senate also failed to pass this legislation. [S. 130](#), failed by a vote of [53-44](#) in February of 2020. This vote garnered the support of Democratic Senators Bob Casey (D-PA), Joe Manchin (D-WV), and Doug Jones (D-AL). Both Senators Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Susan Collins (R-ME) also voted in favor.

The second major pro-life bill was *The Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act*. While the bill, [S. 3275](#), failed in the Senate, it did receive two Democratic votes from Senators Bob Casey (D-PA) and Joe Manchin (D-WV). But, Senators Susan Collins (R-ME) and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) voted against it. The House companion, [H.R. 784](#), never made it to the Floor.

Despite these setbacks, Republicans managed to ensure government funding did not go towards advancing or promoting family planning services. Throughout the appropriations process, President Trump notified both Chambers that he would veto any bill that weakens current pro-life Federal policies and laws or encourages the destruction of human life at any stage. Thankfully Republican members were able to protect the many traditional pro-life riders like the Mexico City Policy and the Hyde Amendment.

Equal Rights Amendment

House Democrats [revived efforts](#) earlier this year to pass the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). After the Virginia State Legislature ratified the ERA nearly 38 years past the original 7-year deadline, Rep. Jackie Speier (D-CA) introduced [H.J. Res. 79](#) to retroactively remove the expiration date. This posed many legal issues that would eventually be left up to the Supreme Court if moved forward. A hearing was held in April in the House Judiciary Committee on this matter. Eagle Forum equipped Republican committee members with comprehensive talking points on why this language would be dangerous. However, strong opposition to the resolution was lacking. The measure passed on the House floor [232-183](#), but was never taken up in the Senate.

COVID-19 Relief

In March of 2020, the World Health Organization declared the Coronavirus or COVID-19 a pandemic. Consequently, the country shut down; schools, offices, and churches went “virtual,” Governors issued stay at home orders, and unemployment numbers increased dramatically.

In response, Congress passed several COVID-19 stimulus packages to attempt to help individuals and the economy make it through the shut downs. The first bill [H.R. 6074](#), *The Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2020*, totalled \$8.3 billion. Specifically, more than \$4 billion was allotted for diagnostic tests, treatments, and to help develop and disseminate a vaccine. The Centers for Disease Controls (CDC) was given \$2.2 billion to help prevent, prepare, and respond to the disease. The package also included funds to help protect and care for Americans abroad, as well as get them back home, and some disaster assistance loans for small businesses hit by the sickness through the creation of the Paycheck Protection Program.

The second bill came just a couple of weeks later. H.R. 6201 or [The Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#), allocated another \$2.5 billion in emergency appropriations funds. Among its provisions, the legislation included \$1.2 billion to help cover the costs of coronavirus testing, \$1.25 billion to provide emergency nutritional assistance for senior citizens, women, children, and low-income families, increased funding and flexibility for low-income children to have food when schools close and \$15 million for the Internal Revenue Service to administer tax credits in the bill.

In this piece of legislation, Republicans fought hard to prevent House Speaker Pelosi from adding a \$1 billion funding stream for reimbursing laboratory costs that was not subject to the Hyde Amendment. This amendment protects Americans from paying for abortions with their tax-payer money. Thankfully, this provision did not make its way into law.

The third bill or the CARES Act, [S. 3548](#), cost about \$2 trillion and included stimulus checks to every American, federal loans to airlines and small businesses, and deferment of student loans. According to the U.S. Department of Treasury, “The CARES Act provides for Economic Impact Payments to American households of up to \$1,200 per adult for individuals whose income was less than \$99,000 (or \$198,000 for joint filers) and \$500 per child under 17 years old – or up to \$3,400 for a family of four.” In addition to the original provisions, House Democrats added \$25 million to the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, \$13 million to Howard University alone, \$75 million for Public Broadcasting,

\$50 million to the Office of Museum and Library Services, \$75 million for the National Endowment for the Arts.

Democrats and Republicans then pushed for further relief bills. However, both Chambers and the White House had a hard time reaching a compromise. Eventually, President Trump signed into law the [House Amendment to the Senate Amendment to H.R. 133](#). This stimulus plan totaled about \$900 billion and provided individuals direct payments of \$600. Prior to signing the bill, President Trump threatened a veto because he desired direct payments to be \$2,000. After he signed the bill, there was rumor that a separate bill would be passed by Congress and signed into law that would increase direct payments. However, Congress never acted before the start of the 117th Congress.

Appropriations

This year, the House passed two “minibuses” that would have [cost the taxpayers](#) over \$1.6 trillion combined. Both bills contained Democrat pork that was anti-Trump, anti-police, and anti-family. The first bill, [H.R. 7608](#), undermined the President’s decision to pull funding from the World Health Organization by issuing them additional funding. It also permanently repealed the Mexico City Policy which would result in the promotion of abortions globally. This appropriations bill passed in the House [224-189](#).

Additionally, the second bill, [H.R. 7607](#), included a ban on funds for a border wall, money for the Violence Against Women Act, funding for the District of Columbia for abortion services, and forced gender ideology regulations on foster care entities. This “minibus” passed the House [217-197](#).

Eagle Forum sent alerts to grassroots activists and scored against both bills. The President issued a veto threat for both, and the Senate never took them up. A continuing resolution was agreed upon to continue government funding until December 11th.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI)

The [Violence Against Women Act](#) (VAWA), [H.R. 1585](#), was one of the House’s first successful attempts at including SOGI language in a piece of legislation. SOGI language in VAWA would allow biological males who identify as a woman to enter into biologically female-only places, not only violating the privacy, but also sometimes the safety of women seeking shelter.

The House also passed the [Equality Act](#) or [H.R. 5](#). This bill would grant men the right to sue if they were denied equal access to women’s private spaces such as showers, bathrooms, and nursing rooms. Proponents of this legislation believe it is

a landmark win for the LGBTQ community that gives them the protections from discrimination they deserve by making SOGI protected classes under federal civil rights laws.

Lastly, the House unanimously passed the [PRIDE Act](#), which allows same-sex couples to receive tax benefits that were previously awarded only to traditionally married couples, a husband and wife, by nullifying the [Defense of Marriage Act](#) (DOMA). It does so by modifying the tax code to allow same-sex couples to receive retroactive tax refunds from years prior to the 2013 Supreme Court decision striking down DOMA in [U.S. v. Windsor](#).

These bills were not considered in the Senate.

Nominations

The Senate worked very hard to confirm as many of President nominees as possible despite obstruction from Democrats. In the past four years, a total of 1,648 were received in the Senate and 1,211 were confirmed. Among those who were confirmed included 227 judicial nominees.

The most notable confirmation this year was the nomination of Judge Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court. After Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg passed away in September, President Trump and Senate Republicans moved quickly to fill the seat. Eagle Forum [published](#) alerts and press releases, as well as podcast episodes, in favor of Judge Barrett. They also attended rallies and strategy meetings on Capitol Hill to help move the nomination forward. The Senate voted 52-48 to confirm now Supreme Court Justice Amy Coney Barrett.

Tobacco/Marijuana

The House took steps to decriminalize marijuana throughout this Congress. The first bill, the *SAFE Banking Act*, or [H.R. 1595](#), allowed marijuana businesses access to the federal banking system. If enacted, the *SAFE Banking Act* would prevent federal banking regulators from punishing financial institutions that finance marijuana businesses that are legal under state or local laws. The bill undermines federal law and allows for legal [money laundering](#) in which banks receive illegally obtained funds. On September 25, 2019 this legislation passed the House.

The second bill, [H.R. 3884](#) or the *Marijuana Reinvestment and Expungement (MORE) Act* passed the House on December 4, 2020. The *MORE Act* attempts to decriminalize marijuana and both legalize and commercialize the drug. Thankfully the Senate did not vote on either bill.

Eagle Forum PAC

[Eagle Forum PAC](#) endorsed a total of 19 candidates for U.S. House and Senate, as well as one candidate for Oklahoma State House. Twelve of those candidates continued on to the general election and 11 won their races.

Two Senate races have yet to be called in Georgia. Incumbent Republican Senators Kelly Loeffler and David Perdue are fighting for their seats in a run-off race scheduled January 5, 2021. Eagle Forum PAC endorsed both candidates in order to secure a Republican majority in the Senate.

Despite “blue wave” predictions, House Republicans gained seats by flipping 15 previously Democrat-held seats. One of the most remarkable accomplishments was the addition of 17 Republican women to the House.

Contact by Issue:

Kirsten Hasler, Executive Director, kirsten@eagleforum.org, (202) 445-8531

Congressional Leadership

Impeachment

Life

COVID-19 Relief

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Tobacco/Marijuana

Tabitha Walter, Political Director, tabitha@eagleforum.org, (202) 341-5737

Immigration

Equal Rights Amendment

Appropriations

Nominations

Eagle Forum PAC