

Citizens for Renewing America

The America First Wing of the America First Movement

UPDATE ON SPEAKER DEAL!

January 13th, 2023

The 118th Congress Speaker Deal

Summary

Following a sustained and committed fight on the House floor during the Speaker nomination process last week, a group of 20 conservative lawmakers successfully secured potentially transformational changes that will lay the foundation for a restoration of the people's House and provide working Americans and their families with actual representation.

The courage of these 20 lawmakers is commendable and under these newly-adopted rules, key process and policy priorities can now be openly advanced on behalf of a beleaguered citizenry, desperate for relief from an increasingly hostile and weaponized federal government.

Rules Reforms: Improving the Functionality of the House

On January 9, 2022, the 118th Congress formally adopted the rules package that will govern debate, committee activity, and floor action for the next two years. However, it is important to emphasize that the precedents set within this agreement may well outlive this Congress and continue to provide benefits for the American people far into the future. It is also possible that the new reforms to the House rules could be altered by leadership in future policy debates that are difficult and potentially divisive, thereby undermining the current optimism of the agreement.

It remains to be seen if both the spirit and letter of the deal will remain intact for the entirety of the 118th Congress. Ultimately, that will require House leadership to hold up their end of the agreement and conservatives will have to remain committed to enforcing accountability. The current details, however, should provide every American citizen with some hope for a more robust, transparent, and renewed House of Representatives.

The Motion to Vacate

Description: This change restores the Jeffersonian Motion to Vacate, which had effectively been eliminated under Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) for both the 116th and 117th Congress due to changes that made the motion privileged only if offered at the direction of a party caucus or conference. The restored Motion to Vacate provides for any Member to offer a privileged resolution to “vacate the chair” against the Speaker.

Benefit: The restoration of the original Motion to Vacate restores a critical and longstanding check that rank-and-file Members have against the Speaker, at any moment. This rule ensures that all lawmakers have an accountability tool to use should such action become necessary to remove the Speaker. The restoration of the motion also ensures the new Congress begins with enhanced trust between rank-and-file lawmakers and leadership as it signals public confidence in the overriding importance of visible accountability. Ideally, the usage of this motion to vacate the Speaker will remain unnecessary as all parties remain committed to the tenets of this potentially historic deal.

The 72-Hour Rule

Description: This rule requires that legislative text be available for at least 72 hours prior to a floor vote. While this is not a new rule, the new agreement provides that this rule cannot be waived for the day-to-day legislative activity of the House.

Benefit: This change ensures that Members, their staff, and the American people have the ability to read through legislation before it goes to the floor for debate and potential final passage. This not only ensures greater transparency but provides time for Members and their staff to review and offer amendments.

Proxy Voting Termination

Description: Since the inception of the COVID-19 pandemic, Congress has operated under an unconstitutional paradigm in which Members are allowed to vote remotely by handing their vote off to another lawmaker who is physically present in the House. This is done through a required written excuse—often offered illegitimately—that the Member is “unable to physically attend proceedings in the House Chamber due to the ongoing public health emergency.” Proxy voting fosters corruption and entrenches a permanent disconnect of civic obligation that Members have to their respective districts.

Benefit: This change requires Members to show up for work, advocate on behalf of their constituents, and prohibits them from outsourcing the voice of their

district to a Member who does not represent those constituents—and indeed may not even reside in the same state. Additionally, this change prevents lawmakers from engaging in political activities—such as fundraising and campaign events—while simultaneously outsourcing their own constituents’ representation to someone else.

Elimination of Remote Committee Activity

Description: Similar to the changes enacted to end proxy voting, the new rules package ends remote committee activity that was supercharged following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Benefit: Remote committee hearings and mark-ups reduce the efficacy of individual Members to advocate on behalf of their constituents, greatly dilute the necessary in-person interaction required for negotiation and dialogue, and increase the likelihood that newer Members will have a diminished impact on legislation and hearings. This change ensures that lawmakers will attend to the business they were elected to carry out.

Restoration of the Holman Rule

Description: First enacted in 1876, the Holman Rule allows lawmakers to target specific accounts within Executive Branch agencies through the appropriations process. The rule has long remained dormant—though it had a brief revival in the 115th Congress. The return of the Holman Rule is an important development in view of the ongoing weaponization of federal departments and agencies against the American people.

Benefit: The Holman Rule provides Members with the ability to reduce the salaries of specific federal employees and target line-item programs and accounts within agencies to reduce spending through amendments to appropriations bills. This gives Members a new and powerful tool to hold federal agencies and officials accountable for their actions.

Elimination of the Gephardt Rule

Description: The so-called “Gephardt Rule” has been eliminated as part of the House rules package. This rule allowed the House to automatically raise the debt ceiling whenever a budget resolution was passed, sending the measure directly to the Senate and thereby allowing Members to avoid an up or down vote on continuing to accumulate destructive debt. Now, both the budget resolution and the debt ceiling will require separate votes.

Benefit: The repeal of the Gephardt Rule means the American people—and more specifically, taxpayers and working families—can see which of their

representatives affirmatively supports piling debt on the backs of hardworking Americans. Additionally, this change provides a key leverage point for lawmakers to attempt to enact spending and programmatic reforms as part of any debt ceiling agreement.

Suspension Bill Reform

Description: The Rules package ensures that so-called suspension bills—legislation brought to the House floor under suspension of the House rules—can no longer be bundled together en masse. Suspension bills often include minor measures like Post Office renamings, but also routinely incorporate myriad authorizations for programs that can total hundreds of millions of dollars. These bills are frequently viewed by party leaders as “non-controversial” measures and thereby often pass by voice vote without debate.

Benefit: This change ensures that bills operating under suspension of the House rules must come to the floor on their own, thereby allowing every Member the opportunity to isolate legislation for debate and force roll call votes, if necessary, to get everyone on the record. This has the potential to stop bad policy from slipping through the cracks as suspension bills require a two-thirds threshold for passage.

Restoration of “CUTGO”

Description: This change impacts Rule XXI, eliminating the existing “PAYGO” provision that requires legislation that increases the deficit to be offset with either commensurate spending cuts or tax increases. The new reform reinstates “CUTGO,” which requires mandatory spending increases to be offset solely through equal or greater spending cuts.

Benefit: This reform not only forces lawmakers to do the hard work of offsetting increased spending through commensurate spending cuts, it also protects American citizens by removing tax increases—a feature of the left’s preferred “PAYGO” provision—from the legislative equation.

Single Subject Legislation

Description: This reform requires bills brought to the House floor after February 1, 2023, to be single-subject pieces of legislation as part of an effort to curb massive, multi-thousand-page monstrosities like the recently-passed \$1.7 trillion omnibus that are chock full of non-germane provisions.

Benefit: This change provides new potential safeguards against hydra-headed bills stacked with provisions unrelated to the subject matter of the underlying

legislation. If followed, this will ensure smaller bills and improve the capacity of Members to debate, offer amendments, and focus on specific issues on behalf of their constituents.

Germaneness Point of Order

Description: This reform prohibits the Rules Committee from waiving points of order on amendments that violate the existing House rules on germaneness. Specifically, the new rule creates a point of order that requires the House to vote on any motions to waive germaneness for a proposed amendment on the House floor.

Benefit: This new provision gives Members a powerful tool to fight back against so-called “Christmas tree” measures that are routinely added to bills. These measures often have no relation to the underlying bill and instead serve as an unrelated priority for another Member who seeks to use the existing legislation as a vehicle to push through his or her pet project. The American people benefit when it is more difficult for Congress to grease the proverbial skids to empower weaponized agencies and reward favored interests.

Rules Committee Representation

Description: The Rules Committee determines the floor process for all major pieces of legislation and under a closed rule, decides what amendments are made in order for floor debate and what amendments are not. The new agreement guarantees at least three conservatives from the House Freedom Caucus will have seats on the Rules Committee. Additionally, all rules for floor debate will require the approval of at least seven Members of the majority.

Benefit: The inclusion of three conservatives on the powerful Rules Committee is a paradigm-shifting change that will foster a more independent committee that is no longer under the exclusive thumb of the Speaker. Conservatives will now have potential veto power over poorly-conceived legislation to prevent it from reaching the House floor. This change finally provides the average conservative citizen with a voice to determine not only what bills come to the floor, but also a voice with regard to shaping the parameters of the debate in a more favorable manner for freedom.

Appropriations Committee Representation

Description: The Appropriations Committee is tasked with funding the broad swath of agencies and departments—as well as their commensurate programs—within the federal government. These annual appropriations constitute the discretionary spending portion of the federal budget, giving committee

members significant power and influence. The agreement has ensured that at least three HFC members would sit on the Appropriations committee.

Benefit: The inclusion of three conservatives on the Appropriations committee is a significant development that could provide policy dividends for the duration of the 118th Congress. This change finally provides the average conservative citizen with a voice on the committee charged with allocating taxpayer spending to the alphabet soup of federal agencies that have been at the forefront of weaponization against the American people. While conservatives are unlikely to have veto power appropriations bills, they will be able to offer amendments in committee and help shape spending levels before appropriations packages hit the House floor.

Tax Increase Mitigation

Description: The agreement requires a three-fifths supermajority vote to pass any tax increases on the American people.

Benefit: This change provides an additional layer of protection for American taxpayers, working families, and struggling households against the ravenous appetite of the ruling class in Washington D.C. for more tax dollars and revenue. Furthermore, this change will ensure that the predominant discussion on fiscal matters is one of cutting profligate spending as opposed to devising new and destructive ways to increase the tax burden on overwhelmed Americans.

Elimination of Collective Bargaining

Description: The new rules package eliminates the corrupt adoption of collective bargaining rights for taxpayer-funded congressional staffers. In the previous Congress, a number of far-left, progressive offices agreed to unionize their workforce. The new rules package neuters the ability of offices to enforce collective bargaining arrangements.

Benefit: This reform protects American taxpayers, voters, and citizens from policies that allow ruling elites to permanently increase their benefits and salaries on the backs of working Americans. It is an absurd arrangement and it is an immense positive that such brash fleecing has been sidelined for at least the next two years.

Spending Reforms: Foundations for Renewing America

As part of the potentially historic deal struck during the Speaker vote, a series of spending reforms are included in the agreement. These reforms have the ability to lay the foundation for a two-pronged approach to reining in the power of the federal government. First, the spending parameters provide a blueprint for

targeting woke and weaponized federal agencies currently waging war on the American people. Second, the spending reforms ensure that the 118th Congress will take votes on reducing the deficit and bending the trajectory of America's \$32 trillion national debt back toward solvency.

10-Year Balanced Budget

Description: By law, Congress is supposed to pass a budget resolution establishing the fiscal framework for what the federal government will spend each year. However, the requirement has routinely been ignored and the national debt has reached historic levels of unsustainability with the federal government running a deficit [every year since 2001](#). The new agreement requires the House to pass a budget framework that will balance in 10 years.

Benefit: The requirement to balance the budget will force Congress to cut spending significantly, nearly \$10 trillion over the next 10 years. But it must also pass reforms that will unshackle the economy and allow it to grow again. Such spending cuts will [necessitate an end](#) to the seemingly unlimited funding of woke and weaponized government.

Reforms to Budget Process

Description: The Budget has often been little more than a tool for reconciliation to allow the Senate to pass major legislation with a simple majority threshold. This was the case with Obamacare in 2010, the 2017 Trump tax reform package, and the Biden spending binges found within the American Rescue Plan and the dubiously-titled "Inflation Reduction Act." The new agreement, however, has the potential to make more robust use of existing rules, including points of order against legislation that violates the Budget Act or falls outside the scope of the spending framework.

Benefit: The Budget Act provides powerful statutory rules for what legislation can be considered by the House. For example, one budget rule that is often waived is the prohibition against spending, revenue, or debt-limit adjustments until a budget resolution has been reached. Another rule provides a point of order against spending or revenue bills that do not comply with the budget resolution. And the Budget Act provides a point of order against the House leaving town in July if all 12 appropriations bills have not passed. The main thrust of the budget process and spending reforms is to enforce the agreement to finally focus Congress on making the decisions necessary to get the country's fiscal house in order.

Caps FY24 Discretionary Spending

Description: The agreement caps defense and nondefense discretionary spending to FY22 levels or lower. The agreement does not include language that would require equal cuts to defense and nondefense, but rather ensures that the total spending reduction would amount to roughly \$130 billion.

Benefit: The agreement allows for spending reductions below FY22 levels, creating the potential for deeper cuts of weaponized and corrupt agencies and providing an opportunity to accelerate greater economic growth in an otherwise stagnant economic environment marred by inflation. This agreement lays the foundation for the 118th Congress to create precedents that truly restrain spending and gives lawmakers an opportunity to hold out-of-control agencies accountable.

Deadline Requirement for Continuing Resolution

Description: The agreement requires the House to pass a funding bill (continuing resolution) before the September 30 fiscal year deadline and eliminates the practice whereby leadership forces legislation under the duress of a prospective government shutdown.

Benefit: The new agreement, if followed, restricts the ability of leadership to jam lawmakers with a deadline in order to coerce them to pass massive funding bills. This change will potentially mitigate the corrupt practice of pushing legislation forward without the ability to read what is in it before holding a vote.

Appropriations Amendments

Description: The new budget agreement ensures that all appropriations amendments will be made in order so long as they comply with the underlying budget resolution, reduce spending, and are not subject to existing budgetary points of order.

Benefit: This allows Members a relatively open amendment process for the 12 appropriations bills, providing ample opportunities to reduce spending and giving the American public a transparent view regarding the positions of lawmakers on cutting specific programs. This change, if followed, will foster important debates and lay potential markers for curbing weaponized programs and agencies in the years ahead.

Constraints for Senate Negotiations

Description: This agreement prevents the Senate from completely rolling the House during the appropriations process. The deal provides that negotiations with the Senate will be rejected unless they pass their own appropriations bills that include reductions in nondefense discretionary spending. Furthermore, the

agreement requires the Speaker of the House to negotiate with Senate Leadership based on the parameters outlined in the House-passed budget resolution.

Benefit: This provision ensures that the House will not preemptively cave to the Senate before negotiations begin and sets the parameters necessary to ensure Senate spending levels will not be rubberstamped.

Debt Limit Parameters

Description: The statutory requirement to seek authorization to incur debt beyond a specified number is called the “Debt limit.” Because of an utter lack of fiscal discipline the need to increase the amount of debt the government can legally incur has been required over and over for several years. The agreement requires fiscal reforms before or along with any vote to increase the debt limit.

Benefit: The agreement utilizes a natural leverage point to control spending. Instead of legislating at the end of a gun, “raise the debt limit or else default,” legislation will have to be considered to reduce the debt.

Unauthorized Programs Accountability

Description: The agreement incorporates a requirement that all standing committees—excluding the Ethics, Appropriations, and Rules Committee—provide a full accounting of unauthorized federal programs and agencies that received funding in the previous fiscal year.

Benefit: This reform will underscore the extent to which Washington agencies and taxpayer-funded programs remain on autopilot despite lacking an underlying statutory authorization for their existence. This will help focus debate on the necessity of those agencies and programs and whether or not they should be authorized or terminated.

Church-Style Select Sub-Committee

As the Center for Renewing America has detailed [elsewhere](#), there is an urgent need for a modern-day Church-style investigation into the abuses of the intelligence and law enforcement arms of the federal government. The [resolution](#) agreed to this week has established a Church-style Committee as a new branch of the House Judiciary Committee to investigate the depths of corruption and weaponization of the federal government against the American people.

The “Select Subcommittee on the Weaponization of the Federal Government” will be an investigative sub-committee of the larger Judiciary Committee,

currently chaired by Rep. Jim Jordan (R-OH). Its purpose is to investigate the depth and breadth of corruption, incompetence, and political bias of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Department of Justice, Department of Homeland Security, and other executive branch agencies. The scope of the Select Subcommittee is broad and it will have sweeping investigatory powers, access to House Intelligence Committee information, and authority to review ongoing criminal investigations. The Select Subcommittee will be staffed with 13 members, including five Democrats.

The Select Subcommittee has the ability to impose unprecedented accountability and propose legislative action to restore transparency and firm statutory limits to prevent the federal government from continuing its weaponization against the American people.

The success of this new Church Committee is incumbent upon the degree to which it has a relatively free hand to bulldog its investigation into federal agencies to uncover the truth and the degree to which its recommendations come with teeth at the backing of the larger 118th Congress. The potential of this committee is monumental.

Setting Expectations

The rules package adopted for the 118th Congress has the potential to be a truly transformative agreement that restores the House of Representatives and ensures working Americans finally have representation for years to come. However, it should be noted that the deal is only historic so far as the parameters of the deal and the newly adopted rules are kept.

Ultimately, it will be up to congressional leadership to move forward honestly and transparently under these new rules and agreements, even when difficult debates arise. And it will be incumbent on rank-and-file Members to utilize accountability tools to ensure that this potentially historic agreement remains intact. If that occurs, the 118th Congress and Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) has an opportunity for truly historic change—one that finally begins to break the Washington cartel, empower rank-and-file Members to represent their constituents, and give voice to the forgotten Americans.

CALL TO ACTION!:

Call the 20 patriots and thank them!

1. [Rep. Andy Biggs](#) (Ariz.) – (202) 225-2635
2. [Rep. Dan Bishop](#) (N.C.) – (202) 225-1976
3. [Rep. Lauren Boebert](#) (R-Colo.) – (202) 225-4761
4. [Rep.-elect Josh Brecheen](#) (Okla.) – (202) 225-2701
5. [Rep. Michael Cloud](#) (Texas) – (202) 225-7742
6. [Rep. Eli Crane](#) (Ariz.) – (202) 225-3361
7. [Rep. Andrew Clyde](#) (Ga.) – (202) 225-9893
8. [Rep. Byron Donalds](#) (Fla.) – (202) 225-2536
9. [Rep. Matt Gaetz](#) (Fla.) – (850) 479-1183
10. [Rep. Bob Good](#) (Va.) – (202) 225-4711
11. [Rep. Paul Gosar](#) (Ariz.) – (202) 225-2315
12. [Rep. Andy Harris](#) (Md.) – (202) 225-5311
13. [Rep.-elect Anna Paulina Luna](#) (Fla.) – (202) 225-5961
14. [Rep. Mary Miller](#) (Ill.) – (202) 225-5271
15. [Rep. Ralph Norman](#) (S.C.) – (202) 225-5501
16. [Rep.-elect Andy Ogles](#) (Tenn.) – (202) 225-4311
17. [Rep. Scott Perry](#) (Pa.) – (202) 225-5836
18. [Rep. Matt Rosendale](#) (Mont.) – (202) 225-3211
19. [Rep. Chip Roy](#) (Texas) – (202) 225-4236
20. [Rep.-elect Keith Self](#) (Texas) – (202) 225-4201