



HOUSE FREEDOM CAUCUS: RESTORING THE PEOPLE’S VOICE IN CONGRESS

TOPLINE:

- **Between now and January, the House Freedom Caucus will work with likeminded colleagues to demand aggressive reforms to return the People’s House back to the American people and make it function again.**
- **The leaders of both political parties have consolidated so much power that most Members of Congress have no meaningful role in the legislative process beyond voting up or down.**
- **The result is that the “People’s House” is serving everyone in Washington except the American people: politicians, connected lobbyists, and entrenched bureaucrats.**
- **Republicans ran to fix Washington so we should not continue the same system that broke it. It’s time to restore real republican government and give elected representatives back their rightful role in lawmaking to implement the will of their voters.**

REFORM THE HOUSE REPUBLICAN CONFERENCE: RECLAIM LEGISLATIVE IMPACT FOR THE PEOPLE’S REPRESENTATIVES

To fix the House of Representatives, we must first put Republicans’ own house in order. The governing rules of the House Republican Conference must be reformed to give all Members the power to fix Washington with a united front and to hold our own party leaders accountable.

1) Enact a “Majority of the Majority” Rule. Legislation passed in a Republican House should be supported by a majority of House Republicans.

Our constituents did not elect us to cut deals with Democrats that cannot win the support of most Republicans.

Not only will this force more unity and consensus among House Republicans by requiring us to tackle the tough issues together, but it upholds Republicans' commitment to voters that we will remain faithful to the promises we make.

2) Restore the Independence of Committees. To balance the power between committees and party leaders so that Members can meaningfully participate in the legislative process on behalf of their constituents, committees need to reclaim independence and authority.

Instead of being selected based on loyalty towards and fundraising for party leadership, committee chairs should be elected by the members of their committee based on their qualifications and effectiveness.

Furthermore, committees need the ability to defend their jurisdiction from being ignored. Republicans should prohibit legislation from coming to the floor unless each committee of jurisdiction has acted on it, unless waived by the Republicans in the relevant committees.

Committees are supposed to be the workhorses of the House and where most Members are most impactful in the legislative process – not sidelined as party leaders handcraft legislation behind closed doors and rush it to the House floor so that individual representatives cannot provide input.

3) Diversify the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee makes nearly all decisions on committee assignments for House Republicans, but its makeup does not reflect all House Republicans and instead it is packed with party leaders and their close allies. As a result, decisions are made based on who is loyal to leadership and who delivers the most fundraising – not who is best qualified.

To level the playing field and better reflect House Republicans (and the voters they represent), Steering needs a significant increase in seats for “Regional Representatives,” roles to which any Republican can be elected by colleagues. Capping the number of Members covered by each Regional Representative to 7 would effectively double the representation on Steering Committee and ensure its not merely the “strong arm” of the Speaker.

4) Open the Legislative Process. For Members of Congress to represent the will of their constituents in lawmaking, they must have the ability to actually participate in making laws. No Member of the “People’s House” has been allowed to offer an amendment in an open process to change legislation being considered on the floor since May 2016. The Republican 115th Congress broke the record for the most bills considered without amendments. Americans expect more from Republicans than to be mere rubber stamps, blocked from having any impact on legislation beyond voting for or against a final product.

Republican Conference rules must be changed to require all legislation considered on the floor to allow amendments. If amendments must be limited to some degree, then any Republican amendment supported by at least 10 percent of the Republican Conference must be allowed to be offered, debated, and voted on.

5) Enforce Responsibility in Spending. Restoring fiscal responsibility requires being responsible with spending decisions. We will never rein in out-of-control spending if we continue governing with kick-the-can-down-the-road continuing resolutions and massive omnibus spending bills crafted in secret at the eleventh hour and rushed to the floor for a vote.

The House is supposed to pass all twelve regular appropriations bills to fund the government by June 30 – in time for the Senate to consider them and the President to sign them into law by the start of the fiscal year on October 1. This schedule hasn't been met in over two decades.

House Republicans should prove we are the party of fiscal responsibility to reforming our party's rules to incentivize the passage of appropriations bills on time without relying on continuing resolutions or omnibus bills.

If the House fails to pass appropriations by August 1, then no other legislation should come to the floor until it does. If the House still has not acted by September 10, the Republican Speaker should be prohibited from recessing or adjourning until it has done its duty.

REFORM HOUSE RULES: LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD FOR THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

The breakdown in the normal legislative process ("regular order") accelerated at lightning speed under Speaker Nancy Pelosi. Not only has this deterioration helped the leadership of both political parties accumulate so much power that they now call all the shots, but it also benefits lobbyists and bureaucrats who game the system behind closed doors – all while the representatives elected by Americans struggle to even find out what legislation is being considered and then find themselves powerless to impact it.

Republicans have the opportunity to reset the rules of the House to level the playing field and once again make this institution reflect the will of the people.

1) Reset the House Rules. Republicans need to undo the damage to the institution caused by Democrats. Wiping the slate clean by restoring the same House Rules as the 115th Congress as they existed before Speaker Pelosi took control in January 2019 is step one for the new Republican Majority. This includes:

- Ending the unconstitutional practice of proxy voting;
- Restoring the "Motion to Vacate the Chair" procedure so any Member is once again able to hold the Speaker accountable by offering a privileged motion to remove them;
- Reimplementing the commonsense requirement that a comparative print is made available showing exactly how legislation will change existing laws before any bill receives a vote; and
- Eliminating the ability to automatically suspend the debt ceiling without a standalone vote when the House adopts a budget resolution.

2) Hold Bureaucrats Accountable. Congress has the tools in its arsenal to hold the Biden Administration accountable – if we activate them. Democrats eliminated the “Holman Rule” when they took the House because it allows Members to make targeted spending cuts in appropriations funding bills by slashing the funding of specific federal programs or cutting the salaries of individual federal employees (e.g., Dr. Anthony Fauci). Republicans must reimplement the Holman Rule.

3) End Secret Deals Behind Closed Doors. House Rules require legislation be available for 72 hours before being considered on the floor. These commonsense, good government rules are easily waived, but it was previously considered a rare and significant departure from the norm.

In May 2020, Democrats gave themselves “same day authority” (also known as “martial law”) to get around these rules and force a vote on bills the same day they are introduced. Speaker Pelosi has kept this extraordinary power for over two years, using it to rush the passage of massive trillion-dollar spending deals so fast that no one can even read them.

To end this reckless abuse, the next Republican Majority must change this requirement from 72 hours to 120 hours (5 full days) and require a vote of two-thirds of the House to waive this rule.

4) Institute a Ban on Earmarks. While both parties have opted to allow earmarks under the name “Community Funding Projects,” the practice remains open for corruption, and it enables party leaders to coerce Members into supporting legislation they otherwise would oppose. Earmarks facilitate federal overreach by spending taxpayer-dollars on personal pet projects of lawmakers and lobbyists.

Earmarks also extend Congress’s power of spending beyond items genuinely connected to the nation’s welfare. In practice, they are often used to buy votes and coerce support for bills that might otherwise not pass muster. Essentially, earmarks amount to taxpayer-financed bribery. There must be a strict ban on earmarks instituted in House Rules.