

## Trump's Agenda Critical



**2018 ISSUES** Clockwise, top left: Trump has said he has his sights on DACA legislation, getting bipartisan agreement (including meeting with Mitch McConnell, Chuck Schumer), and infrastructure reform.



BY FRED LUCAS

**W**ITH CONTROL OF BOTH the Senate and House up for grabs in November, all eyes will turn in the coming months to whether President Donald Trump can properly position his party for electoral success.

Without a solid agenda that resonates with the American people, a midterm "shellacking" is almost guaranteed. "There is a window of opportunity for Republicans to control the

House, the Senate and the presidency," Michael Abrahamson, an Atlanta lawyer and adviser for the National Diversity Coalition for Trump, tells Newsmax. "They should be able to look at that time period and say, Look at what we accomplished."

Between now and November, here are some of the big ticket items that Trump needs to tackle to give GOP incumbents the talking points they need to justify a return engagement in Washington, D.C.

### ► IMMIGRATION

In January, Trump blasted the Gang of Six bipartisan deal on DACA, the policy that would find a way to legalize the residency of up to 2 million people who would otherwise be illegal, as "a big step backward."

He said it would not fund the border wall, and wouldn't address the chain migration policies that some analysts say contribute to terrorism. Trump wants a more selective process that gives preference to applicants



# to Midterm Elections

with high-tech experience or other needed skills. That's why he backs the Reforming American Immigration for Strong Employment (RAISE) Act, which would replace the chain migration system that is based on family reunification with a merit-based system. Mark Krikorian, executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies, predicts some tightening of border security this year. "You will see some expansions and improvements of border barriers one way or another," Krikorian tells Newsmax.

## ► REPLACING OBAMACARE

The Republican Congress fell short in the "repeal and replace" efforts in 2017, but almost made up for it with a provision in the tax reform bill to scrap the individual mandate to buy health insurance.

GOP Sen. David Perdue of Georgia tells Newsmax, "We've got to come up with some fix on healthcare."

This could be some variation of a bill sponsored by Sens. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., and Bill Cassidy, R-La., that would shift to block grants for states. A bipartisan bill by Sens. Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., and Patty Murray, D-Wash., also addresses insurance-rate subsidies.

## ► ACTION ON WELFARE

Trump could be the first to sign a welfare reform bill since President Bill Clinton in 1996. "I know people, they work three jobs and they live next to somebody who doesn't work at all, and the person who's not working at all, and has no intention of working at all, is making more money and doing better," Trump told a crowd in St. Charles, Mo. "So, we're going to go into welfare reform."

Trump may be able to make some progress with executive orders. But

## Past Is Prologue

Since 1970, the average midterm loss by the party in power when the president's job approval is below 50 percent is 33 House seats. If that happens this year, Democrats will take control of the House. Here's how modern presidents have fared:

PRESIDENT/ YEAR		APPROVAL RATING	NET +/- HOUSE SEATS
Nixon	1970	58%	-12
Ford	1974	54%	-48
Carter	1978	49%	-15
Reagan	1982	42%	-26
Reagan	1986	63%	-5
G.H.W. Bush	1990	58%	-8
Clinton	1994	46%	-54
Clinton	1998	66%	+4
G.W. Bush	2002	63%	+8
G.W. Bush	2006	38%	-30
Obama	2010	45%	-63
Obama	2014	40%	-12

SOURCES: Gallup, American Presidency Project

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., has expressed pessimism, telling *The Washington Post*: "I don't think, as a practical matter in the Senate, we can do entitlement reform without bipartisan agreement."

## ► INFRASTRUCTURE SPENDING

This is another big campaign promise that has potential to win some Democratic support, and could trigger some GOP resistance. "I predict we will start working with the Democrats in a bipartisan fashion," Trump tweeted late last year. "Infrastructure would be a perfect place to start." Trump wants to leverage private money through tax incentives. He proposed using \$200 billion in federal funds to leverage

\$1 trillion in private funds for major roads and bridge construction.

This could put some Democratic candidates in a tough position if they push back, as they try to explain to constituents why they don't support projects in their own states.

## ► TRADE DEALS

The Trump administration began renegotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement in late 2017, and negotiators from the United States, Canada, and Mexico reportedly indicated they might reach a "NAFTA 2.0" deal by May 2018.

In early December, Trump talked about "fixing" trade deals, when meeting with GOP senators at the White House. "We have trade deficits with everybody," the president said. "And that's going to be changing."

Still, Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Pat Roberts, R-Kan., told *The Hill*, "It would be a paradox of enormous irony if here we're passing a tax bill to achieve economic growth and on the other side of it pulling the trigger on NAFTA — if the president would do that — could very well cause a farm recession and a stock market reaction that would be very counter-productive."

## ► SCALING BACK REGULATIONS

Halting Obama-era regulations saved \$378 million in 2017, according to a study by the American Action Forum.

Finalizing deregulatory actions in 2018 will likely lead to billions in savings, Dan Bosch, AAF's director of regulatory policy, tells Newsmax. Bosch says a bill would essentially cap the cost each agency can impose. "It would be a regulatory pay-as-you-go. If an agency adds another costly regulation, it would have to offset that cost from another." □