Trump and a Democratic Congress can achieve more than you think | Opinion

What can President Donald Trump, congressional Republicans and a potentially Democratic Congress accomplish?
If all are willing to share a positive legacy, productive accomplishments await.

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After the midterm elections, what can President Donald Trump, congressional Republicans and a potentially Democratic Congress accomplish? If all are willing to share a positive legacy, productive accomplishments await.

The president was asked at a news conference Oct. 23 whether there'd be "gridlock in terms of your legislative agenda" if congressional Democrats won control. Trump answered that he'd "veto, veto, veto, and then they come and they say how do we get it done, and you make a deal."

There is much more common ground among the general population than in Washington: 84% of Democrats and 92% of Republicans agree that Congress could find common ground if it shared the views of the people. Voters are clearly eager for bipartisan collaboration.

The primary obstacle to collaboration in recent years has been refusal to grant the other side a “win.” Here are some positive-legacy actions both sides can accomplish together:

Avoid government shutdowns

No one wins with a shutdown.

After the record 43-day shutdown last fall, Trump's approval rating among Republican voters plummeted 13 percentage points.

Democrats were criticized for failing to secure reforms.

Fund ICE – with strings attached

Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the National Guard and border agencies must be funded, but reforms proposed by both sides must be incorporated.

Avoid targeting noncriminal workers, who make up most of those arrested. Family separations, indiscriminate arrests and inhumane detention conditions have horrified voters. Require judicial warrants and actual use of body cameras with retention of footage, verify citizenship, wear standardized visible uniforms, expand use-of-force training and allow local governments to investigate and prosecute crimes by agents.

These are all standard requirements. But also adopt measures to prevent harassment of officers and requirements for local governments to cooperate if justified.

Restore Affordable Care Act subsidies

To follow through on his promise to fix Obamacare, Trump should reinstate the Affordable Care Act's enhanced premium tax credits. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that without these subsidies, 3.8 million Americans will lose insurance each year.

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Base tariffs on strategy, not personal vendettas

Minimize existing tariffs and enact further tariffs strategically, not based on personal vendettas. The Supreme Court reaffirmed the role of Congress in enacting tariffs. Republicans have traditionally advocated for free trade. With affordability at the top of both parties' agenda, lowering tariffs should be a priority.

Reopen Iran negotiations and restore the 'no endless wars' policy

Prioritize lowering the price of oil, diesel, fertilizer and consumer goods that have been jacked up by shipping blockages. Be transparent about the true costs of the conflict. Restore the "no endless wars" policy.

Keep child care tax credit increase

Expansions of the child tax credit led to a 46% decline in child poverty between 2020 and 2021. The One Big Beautiful Bill not only made the $2,000-per-child base credit permanent but also increased it to $2,200 for 2025, and adjusted for inflation in the following years.

Congress could make certain the increase is indeed permanent and even expand the amount.

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Address the drug crisis

Cut drugs off at the source by expanding pressure on China, Colombia, Mexico and Myanmar to drastically reduce exports of fentanyl, methamphetamine and opioids, which can be 10 times stronger than fentanyl.

Emphasize prevention and treatment as one of the best possible anti-crime recidivism methods – 75% of first-time arrestees test positive for drugs.

Introduce a new anti-drug media campaign to educate parents and potential addicts alike. Model it after former drug czar Barry McCaffrey's $2 billion campaign that helped reduce youth drug use 21% his last two years on the job.

Keep the southern border secure

One of the Trump administration's great successes has been its closure of the southern border. Crossings have dropped to almost zero, a crucial victory as nearly 90% of fentanyl trafficked into the United States comes through the southwest.

A Democratic Congress should fully fund and continue border security.

Protect Social Security

Stop referring to Social Security cuts as "reform." This rhetoric is an immediate third rail and political suicide. Protecting Social Security is crucial to retaining voter support on both sides.

One partial solution is straightforward and has been proposed by both parties: Raise the tax cap to protect against the predicted 22% reduction in benefits**.**

Vaccinate Americans against diseases

The confusing language of recent policy has sent our health care system into a tailspin, leading to monthlong vaccine delays for vulnerable children and an increase in measles cases from 285 in 2024 to nearly 4,900 just since January.

Revert to the pre-2025 vaccine schedule and study what's best for the future. Furthermore, reverse the executive order that reduced recommended childhood vaccinations from 17 to only 11, and recommend the measles, mumps and rubella vaccines be administered in two shots rather than the three imposed against medical advice.

Greenlight AI with guardrails

Collaborate on ensuring that artificial intelligence usage keeps our economy competitive globally while including clear regulations and restrictions. No guardrails makes no sense to anyone.

Pursue ethics reform, but avoid Trump impeachment

Don't get bogged down in trying, and likely failing, to impeach the president, again. Focus on true, lasting ethics reform. As former Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel told NBC News: Ethics reform, everyone's for it. Impeachment, it's a food fight.

Bipartisan collaboration is the rational path forward. House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries and Trump son-in-law Jared Kushner met in August, as did the president and New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani in September. A potentially Democratic Congress and the White House are well-positioned to

enact excellent public policy whose effects will help repair the divisive polarization poisoning American politics.

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