

TO: Interested Parties

FR: Tyler Law, DCCC National Press Secretary

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RE: House Republicans' 200 Day Agenda Goes Down in Spectacular Failure

After 100 days of unified control of Washington, there were already <u>early signs</u> of Speaker Ryan's out-of-touch priorities and failed leadership. At the time, the Speaker argued repeatedly that a 200-day evaluation was more appropriate. He got his extra time, and after even a cursory assessment, there's no doubt that Paul Ryan has achieved almost nothing since January 20th, is increasingly unpopular nationally and within his own party, and is unfit to lead his unruly caucus. With Ryan at the helm, the entire House Republican majority is at risk.

200 DAYS: ZERO LEGISLATIVE SUCCESSES

After the 2016 election, Paul Ryan's dream of unified Republican control of Washington was finally realized. With naïve bravado he wasted no time in rolling out a "bold" (while incredibly misguided) 200-day agenda, which included repealing the Affordable Care Act, overhauling our tax code, funding an infrastructure package, passing *two* budgets, avoiding a debt default, rebuilding our military, and moving to energy independence, among other sweeping promises.

Headlines earlier this year looked like this: "Ryan Lays Out Ambitious 200-Day Congressional Agenda" and "Paul Ryan, Mitch McConnell Launch 'Bold and Aggressive' 200-Day Plan to Implement Trump Agenda." But in that time, Congressional Republicans failed to accomplish anything, leading to headlines like this: "Republicans Reluctantly Acknowledge a Failure of Governing," "GOP voters blame Congress, not Trump, for lack of progress," "Republicans frustrated as their to-do list grows" and "Republicans wonder: Can we govern?"

Let's be very clear: the American people are better off for Speaker's Ryan's failed agenda, which is out to benefit the very rich and largest corporations, while devastating hardworking people's healthcare, cost of living, jobs and wages. But, regardless of where one stands on the issues, the American people all share a desire for our government to execute their duties with competence at the bare minimum. And Republican voters have particularly high expectations. On this, the GOP has failed spectacularly.

No healthcare bill. Republicans spent seven-years promising repeal and replace. They campaigned on it endlessly and all but guaranteed that winning the White House would seal the deal. But unfortunately for Republican voters who expect these Members to stick to their word, Speaker Ryan led the charge and managed to produce one of the most unpopular and unpalatable bills in recent history – even for some Republicans in the Senate. At least temporarily, Ryan's ineptitude has saved tens of millions of Americans their healthcare.

No infrastructure bill. Pundits and Republicans pontificated endlessly on infrastructure's unique ability to pull both parties together and hand Republicans their first big legislative win, which Democrats openly recognized. But instead, Paul Ryan <u>outlined</u> a vision for corporate

giveaways masquerading as new infrastructure investment, diverging greatly from what President Trump promised on the campaign trail. In late July, Republicans were still feigning an interest while admitting infrastructure would have to <u>wait indefinitely</u>. Even though powerful groups ranging from Labor to the Chamber of Commerce support rebuilding our crumbling infrastructure, as do voters, Republicans failed to even introduce a bill.

No budgets. As the former Budget Chairman, Paul Ryan came in hot this year promising *two* budgets. At this point, a Republican budget has not even been brought to the floor because it lacks anywhere near the votes to pass it. As *Politico* put it recently, "Republicans will punt once again on the most fundamental task of governing: passing a budget." Sad, because they really need that budget for their tax cuts!

No tax cuts for the wealthy. Nothing excites Paul Ryan more than cutting taxes for the wealthiest individuals and largest corporations and calling it reform (well, maybe slashing Social Security and Medicare). Given his many promises over the years and natural fervor towards overhauling the tax code, you'd expect him to have made some progress. You'd be wrong.

No debt ceiling deal. The House went on recess with only <u>twelve</u> legislative days before the United States government hits the debt-ceiling deadline. A responsible leader would have dealt with this <u>before</u> going on a five-week break. But that's not the Paul Ryan we know.

"Republicans lament an agenda in 'quicksand' is the perfect summation of the last 200-days. Of course, House Republicans have also failed on every level of holding President Trump accountable, from his conflicts of interest and ethical issues, to tax returns, and more.

REPEAL WILL HAUNT REPUBLICANS

Paul Ryan's biggest policy and political failure to date is his heartless repeal and ripoff bill. In the course of trying to keep his seven-year-old promise, Ryan cobbled together a plan to rip away coverage from 22 million Americans, raise premiums and out-of-pocket costs, and slap an agetax on people over 50. Repeal & Ripoff quickly garnered widespread opposition from groups across the ideological spectrum. With only 17% support, Ryan stubbornly pushed ahead and forced his most vulnerable members to walk the plank, which proved even more foolish when the bill died in the Senate.

Because of their healthcare disaster, House Republicans have faced non-stop protest from their constituents. Local editorials such as "Denham's fig leaf can't cover up harm he's done by voting to repeal ACA," "The House votes to break health care. The Senate must fix it," "Memo to Tom MacArthur: You are the source of fear, not death panels," and "Faso chooses to go along to get along" have covered papers across the country for months. At the close of the first week of August recess, it's clear that the backlash isn't losing any steam.

Just as in 2009 when <u>34 Democrats</u> voted against the ACA and 21 of them immediately lost their seats or retired that cycle, the passage of the repeal bill will haunt *every single* vulnerable Republican regardless of how they voted on the floor. For Republicans, the current situation could be worse as they're squeezed from both ends. <u>The clichéd stuck between a rock and hard place never felt so appropriate.</u>

SPEAKER IN NAME ONLY

The first 200-days has taken a serious toll on Speaker Ryan's popularity with voters across the country and even the respect he garners within his own caucus. As <u>CNN noted</u> during Ryan's

initial healthcare failure, "...the House speaker's reputation, authority and political fate are on the line..."

Ryan's <u>approval rating</u> and favorability have crumbled. At the end of March, and shortly after the first repeal failure, Ryan's approval had dropped down to <u>33%</u>. In April, <u>Pew</u> found that only <u>29%</u> of people approved of the job that he is doing and another had him dropping to <u>22%</u> favorability. A May survey – the month the House passed their repeal bill – found that only <u>27%</u> of people have a favorable view of Ryan.

House Members and Senators alike are taking shots at Ryan. Responding to Ryan's vague plans for healthcare and tax reform, Tom Cotton "mercilessly attacked" and laid "waste to the entire thing with just a few words". Rubbing salt in the wound, Mark Meadows <u>publicly agreed</u> with Cotton's assessment. In fact, during the healthcare debate, it was increasingly unclear whether Meadows or Ryan was the real Speaker. This is reinforced by headlines like "Breitbart campaigns for Freedom Caucus leader Mark Meadows as House Speaker" and conservative firebrands <u>Justin Amash</u>, <u>Jeanine Pirro</u>, and <u>Lou Dobbs</u> calling for Ryan to step down.

It's clear that conservatives are not going to stomach failure for much longer.

REPUBLICAN MAJORITY IMPERILED

In a matter of 200 days, Ryan has put already vulnerable House Republicans at further risk of losing their seats and damaged the entire Republican brand ahead of the 2018 midterms.

In a June <u>memo</u>, the DCCC outlined the **factors that have put the House solidly in play**, including the President's approval rating, the Congressional generic ballot, and the Republicans' deeply unpopular agenda. In 24 Republican-held districts, the generic ballot already favors a Democrat, while a named Democratic candidate is leading the Republican incumbent in a handful of key districts. According to the <u>538</u> and <u>Real Clear Politics</u> average of generic ballot tests, Democrats are ahead of Republicans 45.9% to 37.7% and 47.7% to 38.8% respectively.

This type of shift in the national environment does not happen in a vacuum. Ryan failed on the two most important metrics for leading a successful House majority: 1) outlining priorities that align with the American people and 2) having the competence and leadership to deliver on those priorities. Given his failing grades on both, it's no wonder that Ryan's approvals and the generic ballot have eroded drastically for Republicans.

Paul Ryan did not lead House Republican into the majority, but he could certainly be the one to lose it. If that happens, he will have no one to blame but himself.