House chair priorities in the 116th Congress

Top stated goals of standing committee chairs in the Democratic-controlled House

*Updated in July 2019 with progress on chairs’ stated goals*

July 23, 2019
House committees covered:

3. Agriculture
4. Appropriations
5. Armed Services
6. Budget
7. Education and Labor
8. Energy and Commerce
9. Financial Services
10. Foreign Affairs
11. Homeland Security
12. Intelligence
13. Judiciary
14. Natural Resources
15. Oversight and Reform
16. Science, Space and Technology
17. Small Business
18. Transportation and Infrastructure
19. Veterans’ Affairs
20. Ways and Means
House Agriculture Committee priorities

1. Implementation of the 2018 Farm Bill
   • On February 27, Secretary Perdue testified before the Agriculture Committee and discussed Farm Bill implementation
   • In March, Rep. Peterson and a bipartisan group of over 70 representatives sent a letter to Secretary Perdue asking him to prioritize implementation of Farm Bill dairy provisions

2. Review SNAP rulemaking
   • On June 20, the Nutrition Subcommittee held a hearing on the Trump administration’s plan to eliminate broad-based categorical eligibility
   • The hearing also examined claims of loopholes in SNAP rules

3. Oversight of USDA reorganization
   • Secretary Perdue has furthered plans to relocate hundreds of USDA research staff from Washington, DC to Kansas City
   • On June 5, the Subcommittee on Biotechnology, Horticulture, and Research held a hearing on the potential effects of the move

4. Trump’s trade impacts on agriculture
   • Rep. Peterson has stated that the Trump administration’s threats of additional tariffs on imports from Mexico imperil passage of the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA)

Sources: House Agriculture Committee, US Congressman Collin Peterson, Politico, National Farmers Union, KFGO.
House Appropriations Committee priorities

1. **Increasing budget caps**
   - House Democrats have written spending bills that include increased discretionary spending, reflecting their assumption that a budget caps will be increased for the next fiscal year.

2. **Humanitarian funding for the border**
   - The Appropriations Committee passed legislation that would provide $4.5 million in emergency spending towards humanitarian priorities at the border.

3. **Gun violence research**
   - Lowey has referred to gun violence as a “public health emergency” and has held hearings on the matter.
   - She supports funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to research gun violence.

4. **Delivering disaster relief**
   - Lowey supported and oversaw the passage of a $19.1 billion supplemental disaster relief package which was signed into law by the president in early June.

Sources: Brookings, House Appropriations Committee, US Congress
House Armed Services Committee priorities

1. Examining spending and oversight of the Pentagon
   • Rep. Smith sponsored the National Defense Authorization Act, which passed the House in July largely along party lines.
   • Provisions in the House bill prohibit the Pentagon from conducting military action against Iran without Congress’s approval

2. Addressing military discrimination
   • Provisions in the House NDAA that passed the House in July would undo the Pentagon’s ban on transgender individuals serving in the military

3. Addressing energy and environmental risks
   • Rep. Smith, along with two other House Democrats, sent a letter in January to then-acting Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan calling on the Pentagon to review the military’s vulnerability to climate change

4. Downsizing the nuclear arsenal
   • Along with Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Rep. Smith introduced “The No First Use Act” (H.R. 921) on January 30, which would bar the US from using nuclear weapons first in a military conflict

House Budget Committee priorities

1. **Budgetary impact of issues facing the US**
   - The Committee has a hearing scheduled examining the costs of climate change
   - The Committee held a hearing on the benefits of immigration to the economy

2. **Exploring new policies**
   - The Committee held a hearing on single-payer healthcare design components

3. **Evaluating the 2017 tax reform**
   - The Committee held a hearing on the 2017 tax law’s impact on the budget and American families

4. **Potential bipartisan spending deal**
   - Yarmuth has referred to Budget Director Mick Mulvaney as a “good friend,” and their relationship may be crucial when President Trump’s two-year budget deal expires in September
   - In March, the Committee held a hearing on President Trump’s 2020 budget

**Rep. John Yarmuth (KY-3)**
Chairman
House Education and Labor Committee priorities

1. **Education and opportunity for every student**
   - The committee held a hearing with testimony by Education Secretary DeVos to examine the implications of the president’s proposed 12.5% budget cut to the Department of Education
   - Scott hasn’t yet reintroduced the “Aim Higher Act,” the Democrats’ Higher Education Reauthorization bill from the 115th Congress

2. **Putting workers first**
   - The committee held a hearing on the impact of a potential minimum wage increase on workers, businesses, and the economy
   - The “Paycheck Fairness Act,” one of Scott’s main priorities, passed the House in March 2019

3. **Affordable healthcare for all**
   - Along with four other House committees, Education and Labor sent a letter to the White House and the DOJ regarding the administration’s sudden decision to attack the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act

4. **Holding government accountable**
   - Areas of oversight include ensuring the Department of Education is fulfilling its role, defending American workers through the Department of Labor, strengthening access to affordable healthcare, and protecting Americans’ civil rights

*Sources: Congress.gov, House Committee on Education and Labor.*
House Energy and Commerce Committee priorities

1. **Combat climate change**
   - The Environment and Climate Change Subcommittee held its first hearing on climate change in six years
   - In June, Pallone launched an investigation into the role oil companies played in rolling back fuel economy and clean car standards

2. **Lowering health care costs**
   - Pallone introduced the “Protecting Pre-Existing Conditions and Making Health Care More Affordable Act of 2019” to improve health insurance access and affordability and the “No Surprises Act” to protect health care consumers from surprise billing
   - Pallone introduced two Medicaid extenders, one of which became law in January

3. **Expand privacy protections**
   - Pallone introduced the “Stopping Bad Robocalls Act,” to clarify prohibitions on making robocalls

4. **Rebuild infrastructure**
   - Pallone introduced a comprehensive infrastructure package to expand broadband, rehabilitate drinking water infrastructure, modernize the electric grid, and create jobs
   - The committee held a hearing on the bill on May 22

Sources: Congress.gov, House Committee on Energy & Commerce.
House Financial Services Committee priorities

1. Consumer Financial Protection Bureau oversight
   - Held one oversight hearing of the CFPB with testimony by CFPB Director Kathy Kraninger
   - Introduced H.R. 1500, the Consumers First Act, to reform the administration of CFPB, which passed the House in May

2. Investigations
   - Started a joint investigation with Intelligence Committee Chair Schiff into Deutsche Bank - a big lender to President Trump
   - Is also investigating Russian money-laundering through a subpoena to Deutsche Bank, JPMorgan Chase, Bank of America, and Citigroup

3. Affordable housing
   - Introduced H.R. 1856, the Ending Homelessness Act, to expand funding for multiple HUD programs
   - Held one oversight hearing of HUD with testimony by HUD Secretary Ben Carson
   - Introduced draft text of the Housing is Infrastructure Act

4. Bipartisan financial sector reform
   - In April, the House passed 4 bipartisan bills from the Financial Services committee that aim to increase financial literacy
   - In July, the House passed 7 bipartisan bill from the Financial Services committee that reforms some SEC regulations and creates a new financial literacy discount for HUD loans

Sources: House Committee on Financial Services, Affordable Housing Finance, Politico, Congress.gov
House Foreign Affairs Committee priorities

1. Investigating Trump’s international ties
   • The committee is investigating potential conflicts of interests and foreign emoluments violations by President Trump
   • It is particularly interested in Trump's relationships with foreign leaders and how he conducts foreign policy

2. Strengthening the US response to election interference
   • Rep. Engel recently introduced legislation that would punish foreign actors that interfered in the 2016 elections well as actors that would do so in the future

3. Ending US involvement in Yemen
   • In April, President Trump vetoed a Joint Resolution directing the removal of Yemeni-based US armed forces whose presence had not received Congressional authorization
   • Rep. Engel will still push for peace process efforts, and he has cosponsored legislation to halt arms sales to Gulf countries

4. Oversight of the State Department and USAID
   • House Democrats are investigating alleged retaliation against employees deemed insufficiently loyal to the president

Sources: Politico, Representative Eliot Engel, Brookings, House Foreign Affairs Committee
House Homeland Security Committee priorities

1. **Election security**
   - Held a hearing on election security in February, including witness testimony from the Commissioner of the US Election Assistance Commission
   - Cosponsor of H.R. 1, the ‘For the People Act of 2019’, which passed the House on March 8.

2. **Oversight of DHS**
   - Held a hearing on July 10 discussing DHS use of facial recognition and biometric technology, addressing issues of data security and collection
   - A hearing on US-Mexico border security included remarks from Rep. Thompson that “oversight of the Trump Administration’s border policy is long overdue”

3. **Investigations of right-wing extremism**
   - Introduced H.R. 3106, the Domestic Terrorism DATA Act, to require agencies to produce an annual report on incidents of domestic terrorism
   - Held a hearing on June 26 on the efforts of social media companies’ efforts to counter online terror content and misinformation

4. **U.S.-Canada border security**
   - Held an April hearing on terrorist travel security measures that included witnesses from the Dept. of Homeland Security’s National Vetting Center and US Customs and Border Protection’s National Targeting Center

Sources: Congress.gov, House Homeland Security Committee
House Intelligence Committee priorities

1. **Protect the Mueller investigation**
   - Mueller finished his report, which detailed Russian election interference and investigations into potential obstruction of justice
   - Schiff subpoenaed the Justice Department for a full, unredacted report and threatened to sue but an agreement was reached

2. **Investigate President Trump**
   - Started a joint investigation with Financial Services Committee Chair Waters into foreign lending, including lenders to President Trump
   - Is also investigating Russian money-laundering through a subpoena to Deutsche Bank, JPMorgan Chase, Bank of America, and Citigroup

3. **Justice Department and intelligence oversight**
   - The committee has held no open oversight hearings with testimony by Justice or intelligence officials
   - Held one closed hearing on Defense Intelligence Agency “Roles and Mission”

4. **Restore committee comity**
   - The full House overwhelmingly passed a bipartisan Intelligence Authorization through 2020
   - While issues related to the Mueller investigation are still contentious, there have not been similar reports of behind-the-scenes tensions in committee

Sources: Congress.gov, House Committee on Intelligence, Politico
House Judiciary Committee priorities

1. **Voting Rights**
   - Introduced H.R. 196, the Democracy Restoration Act of 2019, to secure the Federal voting rights of the previously incarcerated

2. **Family Separation**
   - Introduced H.R.541, the Keep Families Together Act, to limit the separations of families at or near ports of entry
   - Held a February 26 oversight hearing on the Trump Administration’s family separation policy

3. **Gun Control Policy**
   - Held a February 6 hearing on preventing gun violence
   - Oversaw the introduction and House passage of H.R. 8, the Bipartisan Background Checks Act of 2019, which establishes background checks for firearm sales between private parties

4. **Protect the Special Counsel Investigation**
   - Introduced H.R. 197, the Special Counsel Independence and Integrity Act, to impose restrictions on the firing of a special counsel appointed by the attorney general
   - Introduced H.Con.Res.24 to make the report of Special Counsel Mueller public and subpoenaed the DOJ for access to the full report
   - Called for Mueller to testify before the Judiciary Committee on July 24

Sources: House Judiciary Committee, Politico, Congress.gov
House Natural Resources Committee priorities

1. Oversight of Interior and EPA decisions and ethics
   - Rep. Grijalva has expressed disapproval for Interior and EPA’s deregulatory decisions
   - The committee has threatened aggressive action like subpoenas to get information they want in their oversight of the Interior Department

2. Protecting public lands
   - Rep. Grijalva laments what he has described as the Trump administration’s prioritization of oil, gas, and coal development “above all other public land uses”
   - Democrats are considering various federal land protection bills

3. Focusing on a diverse array of communities
   - Rep. Grijalva has made an effort to involve traditionally underrepresented groups in environmental decision-making, saying, “I’ve made it my mission as Chair … to diversify and expand the voices we listen to on Capitol Hill”

4. Championing Climate Action
   - The committee has held hearings on the impact of Climate change on public land and on the American people
   - Rep Grijalva supported the Green New Deal
House Oversight and Reform Committee priorities

1. **Hurricane relief efforts in Puerto Rico**
   - Rep. Cummings and Rep. Harley Rouda (D-CA-48) sent a letter to President Trump’s Acting Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney asking the administration to release documents related to the impact of Hurricane Maria on Puerto Rico.
   - On June 25, the Environment Subcommittee held a hearing examining the lessons learned from Hurricane Maria and other recent natural disasters.

2. **Child separation policy at the border**
   - Homeland Security Secretary McAleenan testified before the Oversight Committee on July 18 at a hearing about the Trump administration’s policy of family separation.
   - On July 12, the Oversight Committee released a staff report which argues that migrant families experienced trauma worse than previously thought as a result of family separations.

3. **Use of government aircraft by cabinet officials**
   - In March, Rep. Cummings wrote an op-ed criticizing the Trump White House for not turning over documents to the Oversight Committee.
   - Some of those documents relate to the use of government aircrafts by Trump appointees.

4. **The Trump Organization and the emoluments clause**
   - President Trump and associated businesses sued Rep. Cummings in April to reject a subpoena which called for the release of Trump Organization financial records.

Sources: New York Times, Think Progress, CNN, House Committee on Oversight and Reform.
House Science, Space, and Technology Committee priorities

Address climate change
- The Committee has held two hearings on the impacts of climate change – one in May on preparations to transportation infrastructure and another in July on glacial melting
- Johnson introduced H.R. 34: The Energy and Water Research Integration Act of 2019, which aims to ensure water conservation in research conducted by the Department of Energy

Ensure the US remains a leader in innovation
- Johnson introduced H.R. 2528: The STEM Opportunities Act of 2019 with the goal of promoting research and federal funding that supports the advancement of underrepresented groups in STEM careers
- Johnson is an original cosponsor of H.R. 2397: The American Manufacturing Leadership Act, which focuses federal agencies efforts to promote manufacturing innovation

Oversight of NASA
- Held multiple hearings on NASA missions and projects, including deep space exploration, aeronautics, the International Space Station, as well as oversight on NASA’s overall scientific mission

Science-based decision making
- Held a hearing on “Scientific Integrity in Federal Agencies” that stressed the importance of including scientific research in decisions made by governmental bodies

Sources: Congress.gov, House Science, Space and Technology Committee
Small Business Committee priorities

1. **Contracting and infrastructure**
   - Velázquez introduced the “Contracting Credit Equality Act of 2019,” which would provide small businesses with contracting credit
   - The Subcommittee on Contracting and Infrastructure convened government officials to reform access to federal programs for women-owned federal contracting firms

2. **Economic growth and access to capital**
   - Velázquez introduced the “Ensuring Safe Capital Access for All Small Businesses Act of 2019” that would ensure the availability of loan programs for cannabis-related businesses
   - The committee held a hearing to examine how regulation-related challenges can affect small businesses’ ability to grow and create jobs

3. **Innovation and workforce development**
   - The committee held a hearing to explore initiatives that private industry and the government can take to expand training programs and apprenticeship opportunities

4. **Promoting entrepreneurship**
   - The committee passed five bipartisan bills in July of 2019 to advance veteran entrepreneurship and increase access to capital and training

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Sources: Congress.gov, House Committee on Small Business

Saskia Kercy | Slide last updated on: July 23, 2019
House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee priorities

1. Increase infrastructure spending
   - The committee held a hearing to examine the state of US infrastructure and receive testimony on what will happen if officials do not address the infrastructure backlog.
   - The committee also held a hearing on how federal infrastructure policy could help mitigate climate change.
   - DeFazio participated in the first round of 2019 infrastructure talks with President Trump.

2. Expand broadband access
   - In April, DeFazio sent a letter to Federal Communications Commission Chairman Ajit Pai inquiring about the potential impacts of radiofrequency radiation associated with the upcoming rollout of 5G technology.

3. Improve freight efficiency
   - The committee held a hearing on the impact of state-owned enterprises on the public transit and freight rail sectors.

4. Review trucking policies
   - Areas of oversight include rules on hours of service, safety performances and commercial drivers’ detention time.

House Veteran Affairs Committee priorities

1. Implementation of the VA MISSION Act
   - The VA MISSION Act went into effect on June 6, 2019

2. Protection of student veterans
   - Drafted legislation to amend title 38 to impose restrictions on how for-profit colleges access GI benefits, mandate colleges receiving GI benefits meet Obama-era Principles of Excellence standards, increase veterans’ housing allowances for online classes, and expand the amount of GI benefits restored to veterans when their colleges unexpectedly close

3. Accommodations for a diverse veteran population
   - Announced a congressional task force charged with addressing challenges faced by female veterans
   - Spoke out against the deportation of non-citizen veterans of the US military

4. Improved access to benefits
   - Introduced H.R. 1133, the VA Employee Fairness Act of 2019, to restore employees’ collective bargaining rights and retain talent at VA facilities
   - Plans to hold a committee hearing on July 24 to assess wait times at VA facilities

Sources: House Veteran Affairs Committee, Congress.gov, Washington Post, Stars and Stripes
House Ways & Means Committee priorities

Rep. Richard Neal (MA-1)  
Chairman

1. **Bolster health care programs**
   - Has supported legislation that passed committee and the full House which would reverse decisions by the Trump administration to roll back protections under the ACA
   - Held a hearing on “Pathways to universal health coverage” which highlighted Medicare for All as one possibility

2. **Propose an infrastructure package**
   - Attended two White House meetings with Democratic congressional leaders where a $2 trillion top-line figure was agreed to, but the 2nd meeting ended with the president walking out after five minutes
   - Held a hearing in March entitled, “Our nation’s crumbling infrastructure and the need for immediate action”

3. **Pass retirement savings legislation**
   - Passed out of committee H.R. 397, the Rehabilitation for Multiemployer Pensions Act, aka the Butch-Lewis Act

4. **Request President Trump’s tax returns**
   - Formally requested the returns in April, but when the IRS commissioner and Treasury secretary denied, the committee issued a subpoena
   - The Treasury secretary and Department of Justice denied fulfilling the subpoena, and the committee filed suit in early July

Sources: Congress.gov, House Committee on Ways and Means, CNN, Vox