

2019 Key Votes

The oldest of CQ’s annual studies, Key Votes is a selection of the major votes for both House and Senate for the past year. Editors choose the single vote on each issue that best presents a member’s stance or that determined the year’s legislative outcome. Charts of how each member voted on this list can be found at cq.com.

Attributes of a Key Vote

Since its 1945 founding, CQ has selected a series of key votes in Congress on major issues of the year.

A vote is judged to be key by the extent to which it represents:

- a matter of major controversy.
- a matter of presidential or political power.
- a matter of potentially great impact on the nation and the lives of Americans.

For each group of related votes on an issue in each chamber, one key vote is usually chosen — one that, in the opinion of CQ editors, was most important in determining the outcome of the issue for the year or best reflected the views of individual lawmakers on that issue.

House Votes

42 Russian Sanctions

Motion to agree to a joint resolution (H J Res 30) that would disapprove of President Trump’s proposed action related to the application of sanctions against certain Russian companies. Motion agreed to 362-53 (D 226-0; R 136-53) on Jan. 17, 2019.

In December 2018, following intense lobbying from allies of a Russian oligarch named Oleg Deripaska, the Treasury Department announced it was terminating sanctions against three of his companies, which are involved in, among other things, aluminum mining and natural gas. Treasury said that an agreement had been reached to “undertake significant restructuring and corporate governance changes” by taking Deripaska’s ownership stake below 50 percent in all three entities. Deripaska himself would continue to face sanctions in addition to any other entity in which he held a greater than 50 percent stake.

This raised alarm among many, with Democrats and some Republicans arguing that the deal was a sham, since in some cases Deripaska could still control companies through relatives or other means. Deripaska has close ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin and was at one time connected to Donald Trump’s former campaign manager, Paul Manafort, who was convicted in 2018 of financial fraud following an investigation by Special Counsel Robert S. Mueller III.

It was against this backdrop that Democrats in Congress launched a plan to block the Treasury Department from terminating sanctions against Deripaska. The House passed its bill with 136 Republicans joining all voting Democrats to uphold the sanctions, one day after the Senate failed to do so on its own version of the resolution (S J Res 2).

Just days after the votes, The New York Times revealed that under a confidential arrangement with Treasury, Deripaska would retain majority ownership in one of his companies, EN+. The newspaper further reported that before sanctions had been imposed on Deripaska in April he had transferred shares of some of his companies to his children.

94 National Emergency Disapproval

Passage of the joint resolution (H J Res 46) that would terminate the president’s national emergency declaration concerning the security situation at the southern border. Passed 245-182 (D 232-0; R 13-182) on Feb. 26, 2019.

House Democrats, with the support of 13 Republicans, voted on Feb. 26 to end a national emergency Trump had declared 11 days before in order to free up \$6.7 billion to build fencing along the southern border with Mexico.

Trump based his decision, on Feb. 15, on the flow of migrants to the border and the administration’s inability to manage the

large number of families with children arriving there. He said he'd take funds from military construction projects, a counternarcotics program and a Treasury Department asset forfeiture fund to build the wall, which he had promised Mexico would pay for during his 2016 campaign.

Trump justified his decision with a 1976 law that gives presidents authority to redirect funding in emergency situations. But the fact that Congress had just denied his request for border wall funding in fiscal 2019 appropriations set up a conflict between executive and legislative power.

The 13 Republicans who voted to stop the emergency, most of them moderates in competitive seats, along with strict constitutionalists, were mostly acting in defense of congressional power, and not necessarily in opposition to the wall construction.

But that small act of defiance foreshadowed a much larger one by 12 Senate Republicans who voted to end the emergency the following month.

Both votes were symbolic, without the required two-thirds majorities to overturn a Trump veto, which he issued on March 15. It was his first as president.

Trump cited two previous examples in which presidents had used the national emergency authority to spend money without Congress' assent: one by President George Bush in advance of the Persian Gulf War, and another by his son, President George W. Bush, after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

A federal district court, followed by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, temporarily stopped Trump from redirecting funds, while a case on the merits was pending, only to be overruled in July by the Supreme Court. The Ninth Circuit heard arguments in the case, brought by the American Civil Liberties Union and state attorneys general on behalf of a group of states, the Sierra Club and a coalition of border towns, in November.

99 Expanding Firearm Background Checks

Passage of the bill (HR 8) to require most purchasers of firearms to undergo a background check through the National Instant Criminal Background Check System, including all sales and transfers of firearms through public and private purchases. Passed 240-190 (D 232-2; R 8-188) on Feb. 27, 2019.

The mass shootings that have plagued America entered a new phase in 2012 when Adam Lanza shot and killed 20 first graders and six staff members at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn. But Republicans, who controlled the House at the time and mostly oppose new restrictions on gun ownership, refused to bring gun control measures to the floor.

When Democrats regained the majority in 2019, they pledged to act quickly and to force representatives to take a stand on gun control, one way or the other. But the vote on a bill to expand background checks to gun shows and private sales on Feb. 27 revealed that the devastating string of killings that have followed Lanza's — including

the 2016 killing of 50 at an Orlando nightclub and the 2017 attack on attendees at a Las Vegas country music concert, which left 59 dead — haven't altered the politics of the gun debate at all.

The proposal to expand background checks, already required of people who purchase guns at gun shops, is widely seen as the most non-threatening of proposals for Second Amendment purists. Still, most Republican lawmakers argue that it's not practical to require private sellers to conduct checks and they argue that additional background checks will do little, if anything, to keep guns out of the hands of people who want to kill others. The National Rifle Association, the lobby for gun owners, has vehemently opposed expanding the checks.

Only eight Republicans, most of them party moderates like Will Hurd of Texas and Fred Upton of Michigan, voted for the measure. Two Democrats from rural districts where hunting is a popular pastime opposed it, Jared Golden of Maine and Collin C. Peterson of Minnesota.

President Trump has vacillated on the issue of gun control, indicating in 2018 after a former student killed 17 at Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla., that he was open to new measures. But he issued a veto threat on the bill in advance of the vote.

118 Voter Access, Campaign Finance and Ethics

Passage of a bill (HR 1), as amended, that includes a package of provisions related to campaign finance, voter registration and access, and ethical standards for government officials. Passed 234-193 (D 234-0; R 0-193) on March 8, 2019.

House Democrats assigned the symbolically significant moniker of HR 1 to their mega overhaul measure, calling it a top priority at the outset of the 116th Congress. The tenets of the bill, including big changes to election and ethics laws, dovetailed with the anti-corruption messaging that helped propel Democrats into the majority in the House after the 2018 elections.

The proposals included in the package have continued to be a dominant theme among Democrats amid the 2020 campaigns and against the backdrop of House impeachment of President Trump stemming from concerns of foreign influence in U.S. politics.

Every House Democrat added his or her name as a co-sponsor; no Republicans supported the bill.

Despite the relatively swift passage for such a massive package — totaling more than 700 pages — the measure met a so far unbeatable opponent in the GOP-controlled Senate. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky has held to his pledge to deny the bill any consideration in his chamber.

He and other Republicans attack the bill for creating an optional 6-to-1 public financing system whereby every dollar raised from an individual donor would be matched six times for donations under \$200, as long as candidates choose to forgo larger donations. The money for the match would come from fees imposed on companies or individuals by the government for malfeasance.

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The overhaul also would smooth the process for registering to vote, and it would require additional disclosures from lobbying and other groups that spend money aimed at influencing elections. Supporters of the bill say they're looking to this year's elections to revive its chances of enactment. "If a reform-minded president and Congress are elected this November, we will be on the doorstep of creating a historic and new system for financing presidential and congressional elections," says Fred Wertheimer, president of Democracy 21, which lobbied in support of the bill.

184 International Emissions Reduction Plan

Passage of the bill (HR 9), as amended, that would prohibit the use of federal funds for U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Agreement on climate change and would require the president to develop a plan for the United States to meet its nationally determined contribution under the accord. Passed 231-190 (D 228-0; R 3-190) on May 2, 2019.

The ambitious Green New Deal calling for a revamped energy sector to address climate change, introduced in February by House Democrats led by New York's Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, never made it to the House floor for a vote in 2019. Speaker Nancy Pelosi said early in the year that she wanted Democrats to focus on legislation that could actually become law rather than a nonbinding resolution.

Ultimately the House approved only one such measure, seeking to block President Trump from spending money to withdraw the U.S. from the Paris Agreement on climate change negotiated in 2015 and signed by President Barack Obama in 2016.

The measure passed 231-190, with only three Republicans — Brian Fitzpatrick of Pennsylvania, Elise Stefanik of New York and Vern Buchanan of Florida — joining Democrats in support.

The bill moved on to the Senate, where it has seen no action.

Trump announced in the summer of 2017 that he would pull out of the Paris accord, in which the U.S. pledged to cut greenhouse-gas emissions as much as 28 percent from 2005 levels by 2025. However, under international law the U.S. cannot formally withdraw from the agreement until November 2020.

Pelosi made the bill to disrupt the withdrawal process a top priority and set aside two days for debate and amendments at the beginning of May.

The jockeying included an amendment offered by Arizona Republican Paul Gosar to strip the provision barring funding to pull out of the agreement. That was rejected 189-234.

New York Democrat Adriano Espaillat proposed an amendment calling the Paris deal a form of "climate justice" because it would help reduce adverse impacts on migrants, children and the most vulnerable. The amendment passed 237-185.

The House also voted 259-166 to approve an amendment by California Democrat TJ Cox that would require any federal plan to cut greenhouse-gas emissions to consider the effects on U.S. employment, technology and energy costs.

Before the final vote, Kentucky Republican Andy Barr said the

U.S. should export "clean coal" to address climate change and urged votes against the bill. "One thousand more pages in the Federal Register will not change the weather," Barr said, shouting to a crowded chamber.

Although the House only passed one climate bill in 2019, Democrats continued to press forward with hearings and some provisions addressing the issue added to spending bills. Democratic Caucus Chairman Hakeem Jeffries of New York says the House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis, led by Florida Democrat Kathy Castor, has until March 31, 2020, to issue recommendations and then the party can start moving other climate bills.

217 LGBTQ Anti-Discrimination Protections

Passage of a bill (HR 5) that would prohibit discrimination or segregation based on sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity under 1964 Civil Rights Act protections, including in public facilities, public education, federal assistance programs, employment, jury service, and areas of public accommodation. Passed 236-173 (D 228-0; R 8-173) on May 17, 2019.

Social justice issues were high on the Democratic agenda in 2019, with the House passing legislation to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, to end gender-based pay inequity and to oppose President Trump's ban on transgender individuals serving in the military.

None of the House-approved bills saw action in the Senate.

The measure that had the most Republican support in the House was anti-discrimination protections for the LGBTQ community — and that garnered just eight GOP votes. (The bill to prohibit pay discrimination based on gender was backed by seven Republicans and legislation to oppose the transgender service ban won five Republican votes.)

The LGBTQ rights bill sponsored by Democrat David Cicilline of Rhode Island would amend the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to prohibit discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people in all sectors, public and private.

The chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, Democrat Jerrold Nadler of New York, said the legislation "goes straight to the heart of who we want to be as a country."

The committee's ranking Republican, Doug Collins of Georgia, countered that the bill would set back civil rights protections gained by others, including women, and would put children at risk. Transgender girls and boys, he said, would be hurt "by allowing doctors to prescribe hormones and perform major surgeries on adolescents without parental consent or involvement."

While Congress was stalled on the legislation, the Supreme Court debated the issue of LGBTQ rights in the first week of its 2019-20 term in October. The court appeared divided on the question of whether the Civil Rights Act applies to the LGBTQ community, but is expected to rule on any of three separate cases that revolve around the issue before the end of the term in the spring.

429 Supplemental Border Appropriations

Motion to concur in the Senate amendment to the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations for Humanitarian Assistance and Security at the Southern Border Act (HR 3401) that would authorize a total of \$4.6 billion in supplemental fiscal 2019 appropriations to address humanitarian concerns for migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border. Agreed to 305-102 (D 129-95; R 176-7) on June 27, 2019.

Democrats' anger about President Trump's handling of border security was red hot in 2019 when they were asked to vote on legislation to provide him with \$4.6 billion in supplemental funding to manage the flow of migrants. They were outraged by his policy — rescinded in 2018 — of separating immigrant children from their parents, his February 2019 decision to use defense funding to pay for border wall construction, and by his detention “in cages” of asylum seekers awaiting adjudication of their claims.

Still, the vote to provide the funding passed the House with a majority of Democrats joining a mostly united Republican caucus in favor.

Before the vote, Speaker Nancy Pelosi pressed for changes to a Senate appropriations bill as a condition of granting the funding. Democrats proposed an amendment to increase funds for humanitarian needs and to process immigrants, to strengthen safeguards for children in government custody, and to reduce money for the Immigration and Customs Enforcement division of the Homeland Security Department, which has run controversial immigrant detention centers.

The GOP-controlled Senate refused to accept the changes and Pelosi acquiesced when it became clear to her that a standoff would only delay aid getting to the border and open her party up to blame for the conditions there.

In a letter to fellow Democrats explaining why she wanted them to pass the Senate bill, she wrote: “We have to make sure that the resources needed to protect the children are available.”

It was an act of pragmatism that split her caucus, with 95 representatives, mostly progressives, voting against the funding bill.

482 Condemning President Trump's Rhetoric

Agreeing to the resolution (H Res 489) to condemn President Trump's “racist” comments suggesting that certain members of Congress should “go back” to other countries and stating that his comments have “legitimized and increased fear and hatred” toward people of color and naturalized American citizens. Adopted 240-187 (D 235-0; R 4-187; I 1-0) on July 16, 2019.

Even some Republicans said President Trump crossed a line when he tweeted on July 14 that four Democratic women of color in the House should “go back and help fix the totally broken and crime infested places from which they came.”

The freshmen lawmakers known as “the Squad” — Reps. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York, Ilhan Omar of Minnesota, Ayanna S. Pressley of Massachusetts and Rashida Tlaib of Michigan — have been harsh critics of the president since taking office in January, but Trump's tweet and a subsequent rally that featured “send her back” chants against Omar left many Democrats fearing for their safety.

Speaker Nancy Pelosi moved quickly to defend the women and put forward a resolution to condemn Trump's “racist comments” about them.

Trump's response before the vote on the resolution didn't help much. “Why isn't the House voting to rebuke the filthy and hate laced things they have said? Because they are the Radical Left, and the Democrats are afraid to take them on. Sad!”

Many Republican lawmakers described Trump's words as “wrong” or “over the line.” Some went further and called his comments “racist” and “xenophobic.”

“He should be talking about things that unite, not divide us,” said Texas Republican Rep. Will Hurd.

But others defended the president's attacks. “They're obviously not racist,” GOP Rep. Andy Harris of Maryland said on a Baltimore radio show. “But again, when anyone disagrees with someone now, you call them a racist and this is no exception.”

The House resolution stated, in part, that Trump's “racist comments that have legitimized and increased fear and hatred of new Americans and people of color by saying that our fellow Americans who are immigrants, and those who may look to the president like immigrants, should ‘go back’ to other countries, by referring to immigrants and asylum seekers as ‘invaders,’ and by saying that members of Congress who are immigrants (or those of our colleagues who are wrongly assumed to be immigrants) do not belong in Congress or in the United States of America.”

In the end, only four Republicans and one independent (Justin Amash of Michigan) joined with all House Democrats in supporting the resolution. The four GOP members who voted for it were Hurd, Susan W. Brooks of Indiana, Brian Fitzpatrick of Pennsylvania and Fred Upton of Michigan.

560 Opposing Withdrawal from Syria

Motion to suspend the rules and pass the joint resolution (H J Res 77) that would express the sense of Congress opposing the decision to end U.S. efforts to prevent Turkish military operations against Syrian Kurdish forces in northeast Syria. It would call on Turkish President Recep Erdogan to immediately cease military action in northeast Syria; call on the U.S. to continue its support of Syrian Kurdish communities and to ensure the Turkish military acts with restraint in Syria; and call on the Trump administration to present a “clear and specific” plan for the defeat of ISIS. Motion agreed to by a vote of 354-60 (D 225-0; R 129-60; I 0-0) on Oct. 16, 2019.

On the day the House voted on a resolution rebuking the president for his decision to pull U.S. troops from Kurdish-held parts of Syria,

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President Trump called the Kurds “no angels” while explaining that in the Middle East “there’s a lot of sand that they can play with.” Later that morning, Democratic leaders walked out of a briefing at the White House on Turkey’s incursion in Syria, saying the president had a “meltdown,” and had called Speaker Nancy Pelosi a “third-rate politician.” Pelosi said she was praying for Trump’s health.

Trump later countered that it was Pelosi who had the meltdown and tweeted out a photo of the meeting, which showed Pelosi standing and pointing at the president. Trump canceled an all-member classified briefing slated for later in the week.

In the afternoon, a host on Fox Business tweeted out a letter from Trump to Turkish President Recep Erdogan in which the president threatened to destroy that country’s economy, while adding that the world will look upon Erdogan as “the devil” if he didn’t make a deal. “Don’t be a fool!” Trump concluded. Erdogan reportedly threw the letter in the garbage.

Following the announcement of Trump’s decision Oct. 13, Turkey invaded northern Syria, killing dozens and initially displacing over 180,000 people. The U.S. had relied on Kurds in the region in the fight against the Islamic State, or ISIS.

The House moved quickly to condemn the withdrawal. In all, 129 Republicans joined all Democrats present to vote for a nonbinding resolution (H J Res 77) opposing the withdrawal while calling on the U.S. to continue supporting the Kurds. On the House floor, many members expressed alarm at the administration’s actions. “Walking away from a friend is a sad indication of policy that we don’t want to support, we don’t want to condone,” Rep. John Shimkus, R-Ill., a retired Army veteran, said, while noting the U.S. partnership with the Kurds goes back decades. “I don’t know how we get the genie back in the bottle.”

Sixty Republicans voted “no,” though only a few took to the floor explaining their position. Tom Reed of New York said the reason for his “no” vote had to do with a lack of an authorizing vote on the use of military force. “Make no mistake about it, by voting ‘yes’ on this resolution, you are authorizing the use of military force of our men and women on Syrian soil,” he said.

Matt Gaetz of Florida, a reliable Trump supporter, argued that Turkey should be kicked out of NATO instead of the U.S. keeping troops in Syria. He echoed Trump’s stance on the matter. “We are not the world’s police force,” he said. “We are not the world’s piggy bank.”

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, who has called Trump’s actions “a grave mistake,” said he wanted a stronger measure in his chamber. And yet, the matter has never come up for a vote.

695 Impeachment — Abuse of Power

Adoption of the Article I of H Res 755, which would impeach President Trump for abuse of power by using the powers of his office to solicit the interference of a foreign government in the 2020 U.S. presidential election to benefit his reelection and harm the election prospects of a political opponent. Specifically, it would state that Trump solicited the government of Ukraine to announce investigations into former Vice President Joe Biden and theories regarding

foreign interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. It would state that Trump conditioned official actions, including the release of security assistance funds to Ukraine, on such announcements. It would state that Trump’s actions were conducted “for corrupt purposes in pursuit of personal political benefit” and that such actions “compromised the national security of the United States and undermined the integrity of the United States democratic process.” Adopted 230-197 (D 229-2; R 0-195; 11-0) on Dec. 18, 2019.

Just days before Christmas, the House impeached a president for only the third time in American history.

The House leveled two articles of impeachment against President Trump, the first alleging that he abused his power. Specifically, it alleges that Trump pressured the Ukrainian government to investigate former Vice President Joe Biden and his son, Hunter, to benefit the president’s 2020 reelection bid.

The House adopted that article, 230-197. No Republicans voted in favor of it and two Democrats joined Republicans in voting “no.” New Jersey’s Jeff Van Drew, one of those two Democrats, joined the GOP days after the vote.

Democrats built the case against Trump with weeks of public and private testimony from former administration officials and career government employees. One of the strongest pieces of evidence against Trump, though, was the White House-released readout of a phone call between Trump and Volodymyr Zelenskiy in which Trump asked the Ukrainian president for a “favor.”

Democrats argued that the favor Trump requested was Zelenskiy announcing an investigation into Hunter Biden, who accepted a lucrative position on the board of a Ukrainian gas company while his father was vice president. The theory goes that an investigation into Hunter Biden — who has not been accused of any wrongdoing — would damage his father’s 2020 presidential bid and thus help Trump’s reelection efforts.



Democrats argued that Trump withheld congressionally appropriated military aid in exchange for the desired announcement from Zelenskiy, and further contended that the aid was released and the announcement from Zelenskiy not made because Trump's plan was foiled by an administration whistleblower. Republicans used those facts to argue for Trump's innocence.

696 Impeachment—Obstruction of Congress

Adoption of Article II of H Res 755, which would impeach President Trump for obstruction of Congress by defying, and instructing others not to comply with, subpoenas issued by the House of Representatives in relation to the House impeachment inquiry into Trump's solicitation of the government of Ukraine. Adopted 229-198 (D 228-3; R 0-195; I 1-0) on Dec. 18, 2019.

The House impeached President Trump not just for his alleged "high crime," but also for his attempts to keep Congress from investigating it. The House's second article of impeachment against the president was for Trump's obstruction of Congress.

The House leveled that second article against Trump as the president directed many of the witnesses House committees called to testify to defy congressional subpoenas.

The House adopted the second article on a 229-198 vote. No Republicans voted in favor of the second article with three Democrats joining the GOP. Maine Democrat Jared Golden was the only member of Congress to vote in favor of the first article of impeachment and against the second. Minnesota's Collin C. Peterson and New Jersey's Jeff Van Drew were the other two Democrats to vote with the GOP against the second article. Van Drew later left the Democratic party to join the GOP.

House Democrats brought the second charge after the Trump White House refused to produce documents requested by the House, in addition to compelling some witnesses to not appear before Congress. The president's defenders argued that the charge was unjust and that federal courts should have judged the dispute between the executive and legislative branches of government.

701 U.S.-Mexico-Canada Trade Agreement

Passage of the bill (HR 5430) that would implement the trade agreement reached between the United States, Mexico, and Canada that replaces the North American Free Trade Agreement. It would modify existing trade law to provide for implementation of the agreement, authorize federal agencies and other entities to implement and enforce provisions of the agreement, and authorize or appropriate more than \$2 billion in funding for certain implementation activities. Passed 385-41 (D 193-38; R 192-2; I 0-1) on Dec. 19, 2019.

When U.S., Mexican and Canadian leaders signed a renegotiated North American Free Trade Agreement in November 2018, President Trump didn't seem likely to get needed Democratic support for passage.

Democrats said the agreement lacked strong enforcement of labor and environmental provisions and would reward pharmaceutical companies by giving them monopoly pricing of biologic drugs for 10 years in Canada and Mexico. The pricing language, they argued, could make it difficult for Congress to reduce the U.S. biologics monopoly pricing period from 12 years to less than 10 years.

Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., warned the administration it would need to address her caucus' concerns.

Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer, a former trade lawyer respected by unions and considered a straight shooter among lawmakers of both parties, began negotiations with a working group appointed by Pelosi and led by Ways and Means Chairman Richard E. Neal, D-Mass.

On Dec. 10, Pelosi and Neal claimed a major victory for an agreement they said would toughen enforcement of labor rights and environmental standards. Pelosi said Democrats had turned an unacceptable trade deal into one she thought many in her caucus would support.

AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka's support improved the odds for a big Democratic endorsement.

"USMCA is not a model moving forward, but it establishes important principles we can build from," Rep. Rosa DeLauro, D-Conn., a trade skeptic and member of the working group, said in a Dec. 19 letter to colleagues.

SENATE

6 Russian Sanctions

Motion to invoke cloture on the joint resolution (S J Res 2) that would disapprove of President Trump's proposed action related to the application of sanctions against certain Russian companies. Motion rejected. 57-42 (R 11-42; D 45-0; I 1-0) on Jan. 16, 2019.

In January, Democrats launched a plan to block the Treasury Department from terminating sanctions against Oleg Deripaska, a Russian oligarch and billionaire with ties to the Kremlin.

Democrats and a number of Republicans argued that the deal Treasury struck to lift the sanctions was a sham since in some cases Deripaska could still control companies through relatives or other means. "Mr. Deripaska is a gangster," said John Kennedy of Louisiana, one of 11 Republicans who voted with Democrats to uphold the sanctions. "And I think he is stealing and has stolen a lot of money from the people of Russia." Joining Kennedy were a few vulnerable senators up for election in 2020, including Cory Gardner of Colorado and Martha McSally of Arizona.

Most other Republicans said Democrats were overturning a "highly technical" decision from "career civil servants" and were simply attempting to embarrass Trump. "Political spite for the president comes first, ahead of everything else," Majority Leader

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Mitch McConnell said ahead of the vote.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin made a Capitol Hill visit to sway Republicans to vote against the measure, arguing that overturning the deal could disrupt world aluminum markets. “We have been tougher on Russia with more sanctions than any other administration,” he said.

In the end, Democrats came up three votes short of the 60 required to invoke cloture and the measure failed. The next day, the House passed a similar measure.

14 Troops in Syria and Afghanistan

Adoption of an amendment to express the sense of the Senate that al-Qaida, ISIS, and other terrorist groups pose a continuing threat to U.S. homeland security and the security of U.S. allies. It would call for increased international stabilization efforts and warn against “precipitous withdrawal” of U.S. military forces in Syria and Afghanistan. It would call for the administration to review military and diplomatic strategies in these nations and request that no “significant withdrawal” of U.S. forces occur until conditions have been met for the “enduring defeat” of al-Qaida and ISIS. Adopted 70-26 (R 46-4; D 23-21; I 1-1) on Jan. 31, 2019.

President Trump has made it clear he wants to pull the U.S. back from foreign entanglements, and in December 2018, when he decided it was time to withdraw troops from Syria and Afghanistan, it stunned Republicans in Washington — many of whom publicly rebuked the president. Trump’s Defense secretary, James Mattis, resigned in protest.

On Jan. 31, Senate Republicans put the matter on record with a vote on a measure that condemned any “precipitous withdrawal” of troops from those two countries.

The nonbinding amendment put forward by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell was considered one of the highest-profile attempts yet by the national security establishment to push back against Trump.

All of this came against a backdrop in which the president has repeatedly undermined his national security team. A day before the vote, Trump rebuffed and ridiculed America’s defense, intelligence and foreign policy elites on counterterrorism and policy toward Russia, Iran, North Korea and more.

Trump tweeted that those who work in the intelligence community were “passive and naïve.” The attack followed congressional testimony from his administration, led by Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats, which countered Trump’s claims that Iran was pursuing nuclear weapons, that North Korea was not, and that the Islamic State and al-Qaida were all but completely defeated. The next day, Trump said the matter was all the media’s fault. Six months later, Coats resigned.

John Thune of South Dakota, the second-ranking Republican in the Senate, told CNN: “I don’t know how many times you can say this, but I prefer the president would stay off Twitter — particularly with regard to these important national security issues where



you’ve got people who are experts and have the background and are professionals.”

In Afghanistan, Trump is still reportedly considering bringing home as soon as possible up to half of the 14,000 U.S. troops there. In September, he withdrew troops in Syria, leading to an invasion by Turkey. The House voted to rebuke Trump.

24 William Barr Confirmation

Confirmation of President Trump’s nomination of William Barr to be attorney general of the United States. Confirmed 54-45 (R 51-1; D 3-42; I 0-2) on Feb. 14, 2019.

President Trump fumed for months over the special counsel investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election, and in November 2018 forced his first attorney general, Jeff Sessions, to resign.

Senators raised concerns that Trump’s next pick to run the Justice Department, William Barr, would end Robert S. Mueller III’s probe or keep that report from the public. That ultimately became a central focus of the confirmation debate.

Barr, then 68, pitched himself to senators as an end-of-career professional, ready to step into a job he previously held from 1991-93 during George Bush’s administration, with the ability to bring a steady hand to the department he loves and do the right thing without caring about the political consequences.

Barr said he would resign before firing Mueller without good cause, and inform the public and Congress of as much as possible of what Mueller reports to him. The vote was mostly along party lines.

After Mueller filed his report, Barr faced criticism that he helped Trump spin the results before the public could read it.

In the meantime, Barr as expected has continued or expanded the Trump administration’s conservative policies and legal arguments on immigration, civil rights enforcement and LGBT employment discrimination.

48 Withdrawing Troops from Yemen

Passage of the joint resolution (S J Res 7), as amended, that would direct the president, within 30 days of enactment, to remove U.S. armed forces from hostilities in or affecting the Republic of Yemen, including in-flight refueling of non-U.S. aircraft, unless a declaration of war or specific authorization for such use of forces has been enacted. Passed 54-46 (R 7-46 (D 45-0; 1 2-0) on March 13, 2019.

Ever since the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in October 2018, Congress has been reevaluating the U.S. relationship with Saudi Arabia. Back in November 2018, Sen. Bob Corker of Tennessee, a Republican who was then chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, told the BBC that the death of the Saudi dissident and U.S. resident at the hands of Saudi captors could “tip the scales” when it came to how the U.S. dealt with the kingdom and its war in Yemen.

In March, those scales were tipped further as the Senate voted — for the second time in three months — on a measure that would end U.S. involvement in the country’s civil war, which by some estimates has resulted in the deaths of as many as 60,000. The United Nations has called the war the world’s worst humanitarian crisis.

The successful vote in the Senate marked a historic few weeks in Congress. In February, the House adopted its own Yemen withdrawal resolution (H J Res 37) with 18 Republicans joining them. In April, the House adopted the Senate resolution with 16 Republican votes. It was the first time that a war powers measure that passed with bipartisan support reached the president’s desk.

In practical terms, however, these maneuvers by Congress had no effect. Despite Trump’s long-standing desire to withdraw troops from foreign entanglements, the president vetoed the measure in April. The Senate failed to override, effectively killing the resolution.

Trump argued in a statement that the bill would “harm bilateral relationships in the region,” while also objecting to language in the bill that defined “hostilities” to include mid-flight refueling. In November, the administration announced it would stop mid-flight refueling for Saudi aircraft. At the time, the U.S. was providing refueling for roughly 20 percent of Saudi aircraft.

As a message to the president, though, the vote had some impact. Congress once again rebuked him for his unstinting support for the Saudi regime and its crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman.

49 National Emergency Disapproval

Passage of the joint resolution (H J Res 46) to terminate the president’s national emergency declaration concerning the security situation at the southern border. Passed 59-41 (R 12-41; D 45-0; 1 2-0) on March 14, 2019.

Even as President Trump has shaken up the Republican establishment, he’s enjoyed the support of the vast majority of GOP lawmakers in Congress.

But Trump’s decision in February 2019 to declare a national

emergency in order to redirect up to \$6.7 billion in Pentagon and law enforcement funding to build fencing along the southern border was a bridge too far for some of the rank and file. It voided a congressional appropriations process that had just denied Trump the wall funding he desired.

Following the House’s lead, the Senate voted on March 14 on a resolution to end the emergency and reclaim control of the money. Democrats were united in favor and were joined by 12 Republicans, who ranged from moderates like Susan Collins of Maine to institutionalists such as Roy Blunt of Missouri.

One of the 12, Tennessee’s Lamar Alexander, said he was voting to preserve Congress’s ability to check the president. “After a Revolutionary War against a king, our nation’s founders gave to Congress the power to approve all spending so that the president would not have too much power,” he said.

Even so, 41 Republicans sided with Trump. They noted that Congress had granted presidents the power to declare emergencies and divert funding in a 1976 law, and that the influx of unauthorized immigrants and asylum seekers at the border, overtaking U.S. immigration authorities, qualified as an emergency.

The margin of 59-41, however, was not large enough to override Trump’s veto, the first of his presidency, which came the next day.

52 Green New Deal

Motion to invoke cloture on the motion to proceed to the joint resolution (S J Res 8) to express the sense of the Senate that the government should adopt a Green New Deal with the goal of achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions, promoting job growth, building sustainable infrastructure, protecting natural resources, and promoting justice and equity. Motion rejected 0-57 (R 0-53; D 0-3; 1 0-1) on March 26, 2019.

Soon after House Democrats led by New York’s Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez introduced a nonbinding resolution (S J Res 8) in February dubbed the Green New Deal, an ambitious plan to tackle climate change through sweeping changes in the energy economy, Majority Leader Mitch McConnell began looking for a way to bring it up for a Senate vote.

McConnell and his fellow Republicans lambasted the proposal as a socialistic job-killer, and wanted to force Democrats — especially those running for president — to take a stand so their votes could be used against them in the 2020 campaigns.

Even after Speaker Nancy Pelosi made clear in late February that House Democrats would focus on developing legislation to address the climate crisis that could become law rather than adopting the nonbinding resolution, McConnell pressed ahead. He offered his own resolution mirroring the Green New Deal, and labeled the agenda described in it a “far-left science fiction novel.”

But Senate Democrats thwarted his bid to get them on the record by simply voting “present” on a vote to move forward with the resolution. The cloture vote failed 0-57, with three Democrats and Maine independent Angus King joining Republicans

||| KEY VOTES IN CONGRESS

against ending debate and moving to a vote on adoption.

The vote killed the Green New Deal in the Senate, but Democrats continued pressing for action on climate change. The ranking member of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, Thomas R. Carper of Delaware, pushed for a resolution that would force Republicans to vote on whether they agreed with scientists who warn of calamitous changes if global carbon emissions are not reduced.

The day after the Senate cloture vote, House Democrats led by Pelosi announced they would draft legislation to direct the president to develop a plan for the U.S. to achieve the goals it agreed to in the 2015 Paris Agreement to combat climate change.

And in May, the House passed a bill (HR 9) to block funding for the Trump administration to withdraw from the Paris accord. The measure passed 231-190, with three Republicans joining Democrats in supporting the bill.

None of those measures made it to the Senate floor in 2019.

61 Altman Nomination/ Ruling of the Chair

Affirmation of the ruling of the chair regarding a point of order that post-cloture time for consideration of certain judicial nominations and executive branch appointees under the provisions of Senate Rule XXII is two hours. Ruling of the chair rejected 48-51 (R 2-51; D 44-0; I 2-0) on April 3, 2019.

Senate Republicans wanted to change a long-standing rule to allow the chamber to consider presidential nominations at a much faster pace, including administration officials and lifetime appointments to the nation's federal courts.

Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and other Republicans argued the so-called “nuclear option”—where a majority could overrule the ruling of the chair to establish a new precedent for floor action—must be done to overcome Democratic obstruction. Democrats called it a short-sighted, partisan power grab.

The change reduced the time certain nominations can be considered following a cloture vote from a maximum of 30 hours to two hours. Those excepted from the new rule include the Supreme Court, circuit court, the Cabinet and 13 federal bodies, including the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Federal Reserve's Board of Governors. The move comes after the Senate made procedural changes to make it easier to confirm nominations in 2013 and 2017.

First, McConnell tried to pass the rule change (S Res 50) on April 2. Democrats voted to block the procedural motion to allow for consideration of that bill on the floor, meaning it fell short of the 60-vote threshold to break a filibuster.

The next day, following a successful cloture vote on Jeffrey Kessler, the nominee for assistant secretary of Commerce, McConnell moved to cut his nomination's post-cloture debate time from 30 hours to two hours.

The presiding officer, Arkansas Republican Tom Cotton, objected, and McConnell appealed, asking for a simple majority vote to change the rule.

The process happened a second time in the same day, after a cloture vote on Trump's nomination of Roy Kalman Altman to be a federal judge in Florida's Southern District.

177 Saudi Arabia Arms Sales

Adoption of the joint resolution (S J Res 36) that would disapprove of arms sales to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Kingdom of Spain, and the Italian Republic. Adopted 53-45 (R 7-45; D 44-0; I 2-0) on June 20, 2019.

For a year leading up to this vote, the Trump administration had been ratcheting up pressure on Iran—first by withdrawing from a 2015 agreement that sought to curb the country's nuclear ambitions, then by imposing harsh economic sanctions, and then by moving troops and warships within striking distance of it.

On June 20, Trump reportedly considered a strike against targets in Iran before abruptly canceling it.

In May, the administration announced it would sell \$8.1 billion in arms to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, invoking a section of the Arms Export Control Act that allows the administration to bypass congressional review. Its justification for the maneuver? The situation in Iran was precipitating an emergency in the region and the arms were needed immediately. Many in Congress were not pleased.

On June 20, the Senate voted to block the sales, with seven Republicans joining all voting Democrats to advance the measure.

The Senate also voted to advance a second arms sales measure (S J Res 38) and a package of 20 other arms sales that Democrats, led by Robert Menendez of New Jersey, agreed to allow with just one “en bloc” vote. One of the seven Republicans who had joined Democrats on the first two votes, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, voted “no.”

The measures went to the House, where they were adopted easily. Trump vetoed them, as promised. The Senate failed to override the veto, marking the second time in four months that the administration prevailed on a matter dealing with the Saudis despite congressional opposition.

Sen. Todd Young, a Republican from Indiana and the head of the party's campaign operation, joined Democrats on both votes dealing with Saudi Arabia. In March, he voted to end U.S. support of Saudi Arabia in its war with Yemen. He later partnered with Menendez on a separate measure that dealt with arms sales, the war in Yemen and Saudi Arabia's human rights record.

185 Supplemental Border Appropriations

Passage of a bill (HR 3401) to authorize a total of \$4.6 billion in supplemental fiscal 2019 appropriations to address humanitarian concerns for migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border. Passed 84-8 (R 50-2; D 33-6; I 1-0) on June 26, 2019.

KEEP OUT: A section of the wall in the Rio Grande Valley in Texas.



When the Senate voted to provide the Trump administration with \$4.6 billion in border security funding on June 26, the flood of unauthorized immigrants and asylum seekers at the southern border had already prompted the president to declare a national emergency.

It had also prompted Trump, reluctant to allow immigrants to go free in the country while awaiting deportation proceedings or adjudication of their asylum claims, to separate immigrant children from their parents and to house immigrants in prison-like conditions.

Immigrant advocates and many Democrats in Congress were outraged and wanted any funding to come with strings attached, aimed at improving conditions for the immigrants. But Senate Democrats, at least in offering up funding to deal with the humanitarian crisis at the border, approached the issue with pragmatism.

With the Senate in GOP hands, Democrat Patrick J. Leahy of Vermont, urged his colleagues to compromise. “Inaction is certainly not an option for those who care about alleviating the suffering of desperate children and families seeking refuge in the United States,” he said. “No one Republican or Democrat is going to get everything they want.”

The funding package then passed overwhelmingly, with only six Democratic liberals opposed, along with two GOP budget hawks. The bipartisan vote hurt the cause of progressives in the House who continued to push their leaders to put more restrictions on how Trump could use the money. The next day, the House cleared the bill for Trump’s signature.

324 Disapproval of Affordable Clean Energy

Adoption of the joint resolution (S J Res 53) to express disapproval of the Environmental Protection Agency’s July 2019 rule

that would repeal the Clean Power Plan and finalize the Affordable Clean Energy rule. Rejected 41-53 (R 1-50; D 39-3; I 1-0) on Oct. 17, 2019.

With a little over a year until the 2020 elections, Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer of New York pledged in early October that Democrats would force a series of roll call votes on issues he said Republicans were ignoring. The first came a week later, on a key Obama-era program to address climate change.

In July, the Trump administration had formally repealed an EPA regulation known as the Clean Power Plan, requiring utilities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 32 percent from 2005 levels by 2030. The EPA replaced it with a new regulation, known as the Affordable Clean Energy rule, that would only require power-sector emissions to be reduced about 1 percent by 2030.

A resolution put forward by Democratic Sen. Benjamin L. Cardin of Maryland drew upon authority under the Congressional Review Act, which allows Congress to strike down recently enacted regulations, to rescind the EPA’s new regulation.

Cardin argued that eliminating the Obama administration’s Clean Power Plan would cause thousands of premature deaths as greenhouse gases cause the planet to heat up. “It puts our public health at risk,” he said. “It’s a missed opportunity.”

Republicans responded that the Clean Power Plan amounted to a federal takeover of the electricity system. “It would have crippled our economy,” said Wyoming Sen. John Barrasso, chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee.

Cardin’s resolution went down 41-51, with three Democrats — Doug Jones of Alabama, Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona and Joe Manchin III of West Virginia — joining Republicans voting against rescinding the new EPA rule. Republican Sen. Susan Collins of Maine voted to rescind it.

After the vote, Democrats said Republicans would be held accountable by voters for failing to address climate change. “A day of reckoning is coming,” Schumer said. “The American people are paying attention.”