

The Big Shift in Washington

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President-elect Donald Trump speaks at a news conference at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Palm Beach, Fla., on Dec. 16, 2024. Andrew Harnik/Getty Images



By Newt Gingrich

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Commentary

This month marks a big shift in power and direction in Washington, America, and the world.

On Jan. 3, Republicans officially take control of the Senate and maintain control in the House. While the House majority is the narrowest in history, it is still a majority.

When combined with President Donald J. Trump taking office on Jan. 20, there will be a Republican trifecta setting the tone, advancing an agenda, and deciding what to investigate and what to ignore.

Compared to the Joe Biden-Chuck Schumer-Nancy Pelosi era, this is a dramatic and bold change.

However, we should not exaggerate how much can be done. The House majority is narrow—and the Senate GOP majority is too small to overcome filibusters. For important, contentious policy initiatives, Republicans will have to use reconciliation bills, which only require majority votes

Sen. John Thune is the new majority leader (and the first Republican leader other than Mitch McConnell in 18 years). He will be able to get a lot done. His first key steps will be getting President Trump's cabinet confirmed by the Senate—and an enormous number of other appointments that require Senate confirmation. As a veteran of the House (1997–2003) and the Senate (2005 to today), Thune has a good sense of the strengths and weaknesses of each body. A generation younger than Sen. McConnell, Thune will bring a new level of energy and drive to getting things done in the Senate.

Speaker Mike Johnson has a much harder job. In fact, Johnson has the hardest job in Washington. I was a reasonably effective Speaker for four years. I could not possibly do the job Speaker Johnson has been doing. He has the patience of Job—and the calm inner strength to keep focusing on the work despite constant attacks.

The legitimately frustrated Republicans who attack Johnson's speakership have a deep misunderstanding of what is happening. Johnson's personality is not the problem. The problem is the failure of conservatives to understand that important legislative victories require an all-out effort supported by the American people.

Rep. Jack Kemp worked for years to educate people about supply side economics—and then build support for a three-year tax cut. When President Ronald Reagan campaigned in 1980 on cutting taxes (and then got a bipartisan majority to pass his three-year tax cut) he was standing on Rep. Kemp's shoulders.

Similarly, when we passed welfare reform in 1996, we were completing a reform that Reagan had first proposed in 1965.

When we founded the Conservative Opportunity Society in 1983, we were committed to developing popular reforms that could arouse the American people to insist that Congress pass them. We met every week and took to the floor to advocate ideas which we knew would resonate with the American people.

We coordinated with the House Republican leaders, so they were never surprised by our activism—but we never asked them for permission. We would disagree with them about tactics, but in the end, we were careful to keep the team together. Over time, we developed a brand and a program popular enough to elect the first House Republican majority in 40 years.

The Contract with America in 1994 had issues which were consistently in the 60 percent to 80 percent approval range. Some of them—like balancing the budget, reforming the House so it had to obey the same laws as small businesses did, and replacing welfare with workfare—were so popular we knew we would have a winning argument with any Democrat who opposed them.

We had to have overwhelmingly popular issues because we were negotiating with Democratic President Bill Clinton. He was only going to sign things if they were so popular he thought opposing them would guarantee his defeat. The general popularity of our program led President Clinton to come to the 1996 State of the Union and announce that “the era of big government is over.” Sitting behind him, I found myself compelled to stand and applaud because he was rhetorically joining our side.

We could never have balanced the budget for four consecutive years (for the only time in the last century) if we did not have the overwhelming support of the American people.

Today, at [America's New Majority Project](#), we have identified dozens of issues which could attract 70 percent to 90 percent support from the American people.

Republicans need three key things going into this new era: The discipline to listen to the American people, the patience to educate and excite the American people about their agenda, and the wisdom to only pick fights when they have overwhelming grassroots support.

A disciplined, patient, and wise Republican team will set the stage for a remarkable 2026 election—and an amazing era in American politics.

From [Gingrich360.com](#)

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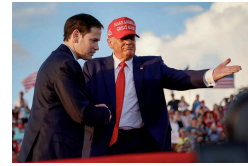
Newt Gingrich is an author, commentator, and former Georgia congressman who was the 50th Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives from 1995 to 1999. He ran as a presidential Republican candidate in 2012.



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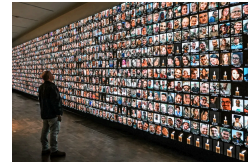
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