

What the trifecta means for us



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As the 119th Congress convenes, Republicans will control the House, Senate and the White House under a second Donald J. Trump presidency.

Trifectas bring a variety of outcomes. Former President George W. Bush unsuccessfully attempted to privatize Social Security. The Obama administration delivered an historic economic stimulus package during the Great Recession and implemented the Affordable

Care Act, which continues to provide health insurance to millions of Americans who would otherwise go without. During the two years of the first Trump administration, he secured a trillion-dollar tax cut. President Biden ushered in pandemic relief and a massive infrastructure bill. Essentially, there is good and there is bad in trifectas.

In the next two years, we can expect to see ideas that will either come to fruition, be dead on arrival, or get shut down when voters head to the polls in the mid-term elections to determine whether the balance of power in Congress needs adjusting. Spoiler alert: In recent years, voters have quickly dismantled trifectas. The last time a trifecta lasted more than two years was under President George W. Bush, from 2003 to 2007.

Trump 2.0 and letter carriers

Several recent happenings have prompted the president-elect to reveal his incoming posture toward the Postal Service. Following \$9.5 billion in announced losses and two contentious congressional hearings largely designed to question the postmaster general's 10-year plan and service decisions, the president-elect once again signaled his interest in privatizing the Postal Service. He recently was quoted as having said, "There is talk about the Postal Service being taken private, you do know that—not the worst idea I've ever heard."

The past is often a powerful predictor. In his first term, Trump established a task force on the future of the Postal Service. In a December 2018 report, the task force submitted a proposal that was a bid to dismantle the agency.

During his first term, Trump called the Postal Service "a loser" and "a joke." He denigrated vote-by-mail as unreliable and vulnerable to widespread fraud, despite using it himself. Most concerning, his task force called for the elimination of our right to collectively bargain our wages and other terms of our employment.

The DOGE

As President-elect Trump announced members of his incoming cabinet, he also announced formation of the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), a temporary federal advisory committee led by billionaires Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy. Their self-proclaimed task is eliminating \$2 trillion in spending, in part by "deleting" or trimming several agencies, including the Department of Education, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, NASA, Department of Defense, Public Broadcasting Service, Internal Revenue Service, Federal Trade Commission, Department of Justice and the Securities and Exchange Commission.

The announcement prompted the creation of DOGE caucuses in both the House and Senate. In the Senate, Sens. Joni Ernst (R-IA), Ted Budd (R-NC), Rick Scott (R-FL), John Cornyn (R-TX), Mike Lee (R-UT), Roger Marshall (R-KS) and James Lankford (R-OK) will lead efforts. In the House, Committee on Oversight and Accountability Chairman James Comer (R-KY) named Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA) to lead a new DOGE subcommittee.

Greene wasted little time going after the Postal Service, stating, "The United States Postal Service just reported a \$9.5 BILLIONS loss in FY24, adding to its approximately \$100 BILLIONS in losses since 2007. This is what happens when government-run entities are bloated, mismanaged, and unaccountable. It's time to demand real reform and stop wasting taxpayer dollars! Government efficiency is coming to Washington!!"

While letter carriers know that the Postal Service does not use taxpayer money for its operations and that congressional decisions about finances have created turmoil for the agency, educating members of Congress who are ignorant about this fact has, and will continue to be, a major challenge, which means that we have our work cut out for us, as always.

Ultimately, the DOGE will construct its recommendations for the federal workforce and the Postal Service, and what the president-elect chooses to implement by administrative or congressional action will be dictated by what Congress will enable. Thankfully, Congress has historically rejected service cuts, privatization efforts and attempts to weaken our bargaining rights.

However, the president-elect has already set the stage regarding opposition. In fact, as the 118th Congress was coming to a close, in the face of a government shutdown, the president-elect made clear how opposition from his own party would be met. "Republican obstructionists

have to be done away with,” Trump wrote in a social media post, setting the stage for GOP members who oppose his priorities to face public backlash, including Trump-endorsed primary challengers. Fear of retaliation will be a challenge, which could affect our efforts.

Understanding and navigating the landscape

All of this considered, it’s important to understand the coming landscape and to have a strategy on how to navigate it.

In the House, Republicans will have an extremely thin majority. With three seats expected to become vacant as members leave for roles in the administration, Republicans will start with only a 217-215 majority. In a full House, 218 is the magic number. Republicans will have a wider majority in the Senate, 53-47. Senate procedural votes require 60, or a two-thirds majority, of those present, and final passage of legislation requires a simple majority or 51, assuming that all members are present.

In each chamber, there are several members on the fringes of both sides who could derail legislation. This means that moderate members will be key to any legislative success. That bodes well for priorities like the Protect Our Letter Carriers Act, which was being reintroduced as this publication was going to print. Since this bill speaks to crime and the safety of our beloved workforce, we expect increasing bipartisan support.

NALC has always been methodical in its approach to engaging leadership, prioritizing achievable success through surgical bipartisanship. It doesn’t matter how we voted, where we live, what our views are on God or guns, the color of our skin, how we define love, or other personal values. We’ve always been guided by a simple formula.

We build relationships to increase our pro-letter carrier majority, educate members of Congress and their staff, and ensure that any policy considered by any branch of government is assessed by two things: Does it protect letter carriers, and does it protect the network? If the answer is yes to both, it is likely that NALC will be front and center. If those answers are no, letter carriers are more than familiar with an aggressive defense.

Ultimately, the 119th Congress will be no different. Trifectas bring no guarantees, and tight margins in the House and Senate bring NALC just as many opportunities to engage offensively as it does for us to be ready to launch our defenses, just as we always have.



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