

A Congress that Doesn't Work: What Leader Cantor Left Off of His Spring 2014 Legislative Memo

This week, House Republicans begin pursuing an agenda laid out by Leader Cantor in a memo titled, "An America that Works." Unfortunately, the GOP memo shows exactly why, under their leadership, this is a Congress that doesn't work. What they have put forward is an agenda that works for some, while denying access to opportunities for millions by ignoring immigration reform, raising the minimum wage, renewing emergency unemployment insurance, or creating jobs.

America expects a Congress that works and with only a total of 12 legislative days during May, the House ought to be taking up critical legislation:

Passing Comprehensive Immigration Reform

While Speaker Boehner recently [mocked](#) his Republican colleagues for resisting action on comprehensive immigration reform, he ignored the fact that GOP leadership has refused to bring a bill to the Floor for a vote. Immigration reform would boost our economy and reduce the deficit by \$900 billion over the next twenty years. With 199 bipartisan cosponsors of H.R. 15, 191 Democrats backing a discharge petition to force a vote, and more and more Republicans coming out in support of reform, Speaker Boehner should allow the House to work its will.

Rep. Peter King (R-NY): "In the missive, dated April 23, King tells Boehner that a 'confluence of events' makes immigration reform possible, including a path to citizenship coupled with 'strong and real' border security and enforcement measures. 'It would be in our country's national interest as well as the interest of our party if this could be achieved and I want to assure you of my support as this effort goes forward,' King wrote." [Politico, [4/24/14](#)]

Rep. Aaron Schock (R-IL): "'Quite frankly, I think if a man or a woman likes their American job, wherever they were born, they should be able to keep that job,' Schock says... 'We need a clear path to citizenship for workers who are already here and a fair and efficient on-ramp for those who want to come here.'" [Politico, [4/22/14](#)]

Rep. John Shimkus: "I do support [immigration reform]...we have to address the 12 million undocumented immigrants who are already here by moving them legally into the workforce..." [Crain's Chicago Business, [4/22/14](#)]

Raising the Minimum Wage

The Senate is expected to consider legislation this week to increase the minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour. Doing so will increase wages for at least 25 million workers, lift over one million Americans out of poverty, and generate \$22 billion in new economic activity. A majority of Americans agree that it's time to raise the minimum wage:

Washington Post/ABC News Poll: 50% of Americans say they would be more likely to vote for a congressional candidate who supports increasing the minimum wage. [Washington Post, [4/17](#)]

Pew Research Center/USA Today: 73% of Americans favor raising the federal minimum wage from its current level of \$7.25 an hour to \$10.10 an hour. [Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, [1/23/14](#)]

Renewing Unemployment Insurance

More than 2.5 million Americans have lost emergency unemployment insurance, and every week Republicans refuse to take action, an additional 72,000 Americans on average lose this assistance. The Senate worked on a bipartisan basis to pass legislation to extend unemployment insurance for Americans retroactively. Unfortunately, House Republican leaders are ignoring bipartisan calls to take up this legislation and provide job-seekers with assistance while they continue their search for work.

Letter from Governors Brian Sandoval (R-NV) and Lincoln Chaffee (D-RI): “We write in support of S. 2148, the Emergency Unemployment Compensation Extension Act of 2014, and **to urge the House to pass this bill as soon as possible...** As you know, long-term unemployment remains unacceptably high despite the fact that our economy has been recovering from the worst recession in generations. **When our country has experienced similar rates of long-term unemployment in the past, Congress has consistently acted in a bipartisan fashion to extend emergency unemployment benefits...**Some groups have expressed concerns with the inherent complexities of administering S.2148. Despite these challenges, **our states are more than capable of implementing this legislation**, including the administration of retroactive benefits, which we have successfully done in the past.” [4/11/14]

Job Creation

The Republican agenda fails to address jobs legislation, and Democrats continue to urge House Republican leadership to take up Make It In America bills to grow our manufacturing sector and create well-paying jobs. Earlier this month, House Democrats added the goal of reauthorizing the Export-Import Bank to the Make It In America plan. Already, companies are reporting lost business due to uncertainty about reauthorization and business groups are urging action on the issue.

Myron Brilliant, Executive Vice President and head of International Affairs at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce: “At a time when polls show the economy, growth, and jobs remain top priorities, efforts to hobble Ex-Im will quickly hit the headlines as export deals are lost to third-country competitors. We can’t let that happen. For the sake of American exporters small and large, it’s time for Congress to reauthorize Ex-Im.” [The Hill, [4/28/14](#)]