



New House Speaker Paul Ryan of Wis. calls for a bold pro-growth agenda Thursday as he delivers his first major policy speech since talking over the gavel just over a month ago at the Library of Congress on Capitol Hill in Washington. | AP Photo

Ryan calls for 'bold, pro-growth agenda'

By ERICA WERNER
AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON — New Speaker Paul Ryan pledged Thursday that the House will finally come up with a replacement to President Barack Obama's health care law and attempt to overhaul the tax code, as he committed the GOP to a "bold, pro-growth agenda" for 2016 and beyond.

"Our No. 1 goal for the next year is to put together a complete alternative to the left's agenda," the Wisconsin Republican said at the Library of Congress in what aides billed as his first major address as speaker. "We will not be cowed. We are not here to smooth things over. We are here to shake things up."

Although short on new ideas and lacking specifics, Ryan's speech made clear that he has no desire to hang back and play a supporting role to the GOP's presidential nominee next year. Ryan himself was the party's vice presidential nominee in 2012.

And the former House Budget Committee chairman who's proposed slashing Medicaid and converting Medicare into a voucher-like program also

suggested he is more interested in promulgating a GOP vision than in finding common ground with Obama.

"Even if he won't sign them into law, we will put out specific proposals and give the people a real choice," Ryan said.

Ryan replaced former Speaker John Boehner of Ohio just over a month ago after Boehner resigned under pressure from House conservatives. Initially reluctant to take on the job of speaker, Ryan agreed to do so after it became clear he was the only House Republican with widespread support from his colleagues.

Thus far, Ryan still seems to be enjoying a honeymoon, but that will be tested by a Dec. 11 deadline to pass a package of spending bills or face a partial government shutdown.

Ryan privately told lawmakers Thursday that he views the massive spending package now being finalized as a "crap sandwich," according to Rep. Matt Salmon, R-Ariz. But he is urging them to swallow it and make a fresh start next year, Salmon said.

And even as he negotiates with Democrats over the spending legislation,

“ But now the country is divided. And the federal government has grown arrogant, condescending, and outright paternalistic.”

Paul Ryan, House speaker

Ryan launched broadsides against Obama.

"I don't think all that many people are walking away from this presidency thinking, 'That went well,'" Ryan said. "We still have enormous problems. But now the country is divided. And the federal government has grown arrogant, condescending, and outright paternalistic."

Republicans have promised but failed to coalesce around a replacement to "Obamacare" since it became law more than five years ago. Instead, they've voted dozens of times to replace it in part or in full, an effort happening again Thursday in the Senate. Ryan committed once again to finally coming up with a GOP alternative. "We think this problem is so urgent that, next year, we are going to unveil a plan to replace every word of Obamacare," he said.

On taxes, Ryan called for

eliminating loopholes and collapsing down to two or three rates. "The only way to fix our broken tax code is to simplify, simplify, simplify," he said.

Thursday's speech was laced with familiar conservative, free-market solutions to the nation's ills that Ryan has advocated for during his 17-year career in Congress. His most significant proposal has been a non-binding balanced budget outline that has been a mainstay for the GOP majority for its five years atop the House.

But there has been little follow-up in the form of binding legislation. His sweeping promises on Medicare have never been drafted — much less brought to a vote — and he made no visible progress on reforming the loophole-cluttered tax code during his 10 months as chairman of the tax-writing Ways and Means Committee.

Senate OKs bill against Obama health care law

By ALAN FRAM
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Republicans have muscled legislation through the Senate aimed at crippling two of their favorite targets: President Barack Obama's health

care law and Planned Parenthood.

Thursday's 52-47 vote came with GOP lawmakers all but applauding a promised veto by Obama.

They want to use that veto as a message to signal voters in next year's elections that

sending a Republican to the White House could doom the health care overhaul and the money Planned Parenthood gets from federal taxpayers.

After the House's expected rubber stamp in coming days, the bill will be the first

to reach Obama's desk demolishing his health care law and blocking Planned Parenthood's federal money. Democrats say the bill would deny health coverage to millions of Americans who have gained coverage from the law.

{ NEWS BRIEFS }

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON

Congress revives the Export-Import Bank; establishment win

With little fanfare, Congress has revived the federal Export-Import Bank five months after allowing it to expire. That hands a victory to business groups and a defeat to tea party conservatives and the billionaire GOP donor Koch Brothers.

A measure extending the bank through 2019 was included in a massive transportation bill that cleared the House and Senate Thursday and is expected to be signed by President Barack Obama.

The small federal agency makes and guarantees loans to help foreign customers buy U.S. exports. Business groups like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce say it's necessary for U.S. competitiveness, since most overseas competitors rely on similar government help.

WASHINGTON

Trump picked stock fraud felon as senior adviser

Donald Trump tapped a man to be a senior business adviser to his real-estate empire even after the man's past involvement in a major mafia-linked stock fraud scheme became public.

Felix Sater pleaded guilty to one count of racketeering in 1998. His conviction remained secret for nearly a decade as he worked as a government informant and an executive at the Bayrock Group, a real estate firm that partnered with Trump.

After Sater's criminal history came to light in 2007, Trump distanced himself from him. But Trump gave Sater an office inside the Trump Organization and the title of senior adviser in 2010.

A Trump attorney said Sater's stay lasted for only six months, and that Trump had not known of Sater's criminal past during Sater's time at Bayrock.

BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

Hungary: Paris fugitive recruited men amid Budapest migrants

Hungary's government has confirmed that Salah Abdeslam, a fugitive suspected in the deadly Paris attacks, was in the Budapest train station before mid-September and left with men who had been traveling amid a wave of asylum-seekers trying to enter Europe.

Janos Lazar, Prime Minister Viktor Orban's chief of staff, says Thursday at a press conference that the Hungarian secret services had confirmed information about Abdeslam they had received from foreign agencies. He says the agency did not have this information at the time of the Nov. 13 Paris attacks nor even as the Budapest train station became a hotspot last summer during Europe's migrant crisis.

While Lazar did not mention Abdeslam by name, his identity was confirmed to The Associated Press by a government spokesman who spoke on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the information.

According to Lazar, the Paris fugitive was at the Keleti Railway terminal in Budapest where he recruited young men who were refusing to register with Hungarian authorities and he left the country with them.

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