



UNRIG THE RULES

EXPLAINER

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6 Potential Rules Changes in the 117th Congress

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On October 1, the House Rules Committee held a [hearing](#) to consider House members' ideas for rules changes in the next Congress. Here are six of the proposed changes:

Motion to Recommit (MTR): The motion to recommit is a floor procedure that was originally intended to allow the minority party to provide additional legislative changes on the House floor before a final vote on a bill is taken. Recently however, the MTR has been used to advance poison pill amendments and to further a partisan agenda. *Congressional Progressive Caucus (CPC) Co-Chairs Pramila Jayapal (D-WA) and Mark Pocan (D-WI) recommended that the MTR be reformed or eliminated. Reps. Katie Porter (D-CA) and Stephanie Murphy (D-FL) proposed raising adoption of the MTR to a 2/3-majority threshold.*

PAYGO Rule: The “pay as you go” (PAYGO) rule is a congressional budget requirement that prohibits legislation from being adopted if the provision raises spending or cuts taxes without that change being offset elsewhere. This rule [restricts the House's ability to pass bold, progressive legislation](#) and impedes the delivery of critical resources to the most vulnerable. *CPC Co-Chairs Jayapal and Pocan recommended that the PAYGO rule be eliminated in the 117th Congress.*

Inherent Contempt: Following the Trump Administration's refusal to comply with Congressional subpoenas, Rep. Ted Lieu (D-CA) introduced the [Congressional Inherent Contempt Power Act](#), a proposal to compel witnesses to testify before Congress when a subpoena is issued. *Rep. Lieu suggested the committee impose fines on witnesses who do not cooperate with subpoenas as part of the rules package for the 117th Congress.*

Witness Diversity: In January, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC), Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), and Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC) announced the [Witness Diversity Initiative](#), an effort to track and provide transparency for the diversity of expert witnesses that testify before committees. This project aims to ensure a fuller and more diverse representation of voices and perspectives as committees consider the pressing issues facing working people. *CHC Chair Joaquin Castro (D-TX) urged the committee to formalize this initiative in the next House rules package.*

House Calendar: The Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress recommended reforming the congressional calendar to reduce the number of travel days. *Reps. Mark Pocan (D-WI) and William Timmons (R-SC) proposed an alternative, predictable House schedule: two weeks of legislative work followed by a two-week district work period.*

Congressionally-Directed Spending (CDS): Congressionally-directed spending, commonly referred to as “earmarks,” is a member-requested allocation of discretionary spending for a specific project, generally within a member's district. While there has been a moratorium on this practice since 2011, many members - both Democratic and Republican - have supported reinstating CDS. *Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-MD) and other members proposed lifting the moratorium on CDS in the 117th Congress and limiting the funding to governmental or nonprofit entities, returning those spending decisions to Congress from the Executive Branch.*