

President Donald Trump - First Three Years 20 Significant Accomplishments

Nominations of Constitutionalist Judges

One of Donald Trump's major campaign promises was to nominate "originalist" judges who would interpret the law based on the Constitution as written rather than "activist" judges who would attempt to legislate from the bench. He has already exceeded expectations.

He has been aided in this by a Republican majority in the Senate (albeit a slim majority) and the unusual reality that Obama left open approximately 140 vacancies (probably on the assumption that Hillary Clinton would succeed him).

For reference, the numbers of authorized US federal judgeships are as follows:

Supreme Court – 9
Courts of Appeal – 179
District Courts – 667

As of today's date (December 31, 2019), the US Senate has approved the following Trump nominations:

Supreme Court – 2 (Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh)
Courts of Appeal – 50
District Courts – 133

Moreover – and despite foot-dragging by the Democrats – Trump has a large number of nominations that are proceeding through various stages of the Senate approval process. Trump is currently projected to instate an additional 81 judges (Courts of Appeal – 2; District Courts – 79) by the end of his first term. If these numbers are reached, Trump's total nominations would represent approximately 30 percent of all sitting judges on both the Courts of Appeal and the District Courts.

As was the case with Gorsuch and Kavanaugh, Trump is nominating relatively young judges. Since all of these are life-time appointments, Trump's nominations will have a major impact on the tenor of the US Judicial System for a full generation.

Resetting America's Relationship with China

When China was admitted into the World Trade Organization (WTO) in December 2001, proponents in the United States argued that giving China a seat at the table in a globalizing world would result in China moving away from its communist model of

governance to a more democratic system. China was anxious to join the WTO as it gave them access to new trading partners and better rates with existing ones.

Over the past two decades, China's economic rise has been meteoric but it has not become more democratic. Conversely, its vast economic gains appear to have legitimized President Xi's assertion that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is essential to maintaining economic stability and dominating technology-driven industries. China's tight controls extend to the Internet – which was supposed to be a gateway to reform and innovation – and the CCP uses it as a tool to block political dissent.

While China has benefited greatly from the WTO by taking advantage of provisions that suit its interests, it has habitually skirted less convenient restrictions and has engaged in intellectual property rights theft and forced technology transfers. It has also maintained investment limitations, high tariffs and other trade barriers.

Donald Trump is the first US President to effectively confront China over its unfair trade practices. Faced with an annual trade deficit with China of approximately \$380 billion and China's ongoing theft of intellectual property, Trump adopted a hardline approach and in mid-2018 began gradually imposing tariffs on a range of products imported from China.

According to the Office of the US Trade Representative, goods and services trade with China totaled an estimated \$737.1 billion in 2018. Exports were \$179.3 billion and imports were \$557.9 billion, resulting in a goods and services trade deficit with China of \$378.6 billion in 2018.

Ongoing negotiations between the US and China resulted in agreement to the terms of Phase One of a trade deal in mid-December 2019. The Phase One agreement is to be officially signed in January 2020.

According to a statement by the US Trade Representative's office, the US agreed to modify its tariffs on Chinese goods in a "significant way", while China agreed to buy substantially more US goods and services.

The Trump Administration is projecting that, over the next two years, China will increase its imports of US goods and services by approximately \$200 billion per year. If this figure is realized, it would more than double the current level of China's total imports from the United States.

Under the Phase One agreement, Washington will maintain 25 percent tariffs on about \$250 billion of Chinese imports, and reduce to around 7.5 percent tariffs imposed on \$120 billion of other Chinese imports.

China has committed to reduce non-tariff barriers to agricultural products such as poultry, seafood and feed additives as well as approval of biotechnology products.

The Phase One trade agreement reportedly requires structural reforms to China's economic and trade regime in areas of intellectual property, technology transfer, agriculture, financial services, currency and foreign exchange and also includes a "strong dispute resolution system."

Destruction of the Islamist Caliphate in Iraq and Syria

By late 2014, ISIS forces had established a Caliphate in Eastern Syria and Western Iraq. They occupied Mosul, the second largest city in Iraq, along with other significant population centers in both Iraq and Syria. By some estimates, the Caliphate straddled a land mass equal in size to Great Britain and gave ISIS control over the largest oilfield in Syria and other oil producing areas in Iraq.

Following his Inauguration in early 2017, President Trump prioritized a hardline approach toward Islamism.

Within a two-year period, the territorial borders of the Iraq-Syria Caliphate were completely obliterated, thereby denying ISIS a geographical base from which to carry out military and economic activities.

By any objective measure, this ranks as a major accomplishment of the Trump Administration.

Just before the end of October, 2019, US Special Forces carried out a high precision raid on a compound in Northwestern Syria, killing ISIS founder and leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi along a number of his associates.

Rebuilding and Revitalizing the US Military

President Trump engaged in a major rebuild of the US Military following years of budget sequestration and depletion/destruction of equipment in ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Trump secured consecutive military budgets of \$700 billion, \$716 billion and \$738 billion. These are huge numbers and have added to the national debt but Trump and his advisors believed that major new investments were essential following eight years of neglect under Barack Obama.

Trump has strongly championed US military forces and has promised to restore the military's morale and pride. He has advocated for more autonomy for local commanders in foreign combat zones, stating repeatedly that he will "empower our military to fight," a shot at what he and conservatives saw as the last administration's micromanagement of defense operations overseas.

In July of 2016, as President Obama's second term was coming to a close, he lifted long-standing restrictions on military service by transgender persons – those who identify psychologically with something other than their biological sex.

A year later, Donald Trump fulfilled a campaign promise to stop using the military for social experiments, and announced on Twitter that he would reverse the Obama policy. In March 2018, after careful study by a panel of experts, Defense Secretary James Mattis tabled a detailed new policy and the substantial justifications for it.

The Trump Administration has unequivocally taken the position that military readiness is more important than political correctness and has argued that the US should not be diverting taxpayer dollars from mission-critical training to funding for controversial gender reassignment surgeries and transgender sensitivity training for service members.

Lawsuits were filed against the Trump/Mattis policy in four different US District Courts, though, and all four judges issued preliminary injunctions to prevent the policy from taking effect. It was not until after the Supreme Court intervened that the last of the injunctions was lifted, allowing the new policy to take effect.

While none of the cases have reached a final decision yet, the Supreme Court's decision is encouraging. In the end, the courts must decide whether or not to uphold a commander-in-chief's power to make personnel policy for the armed forces.

Enhanced Border Security

Building a wall along the Southern border of the USA to curtail illegal immigration, human trafficking and drug smuggling was one of Donald Trump's most publicized campaign promises.

Construction has been delayed due to opposition by Democrats in Congress and their unwillingness to approve sufficient funding, however, the Trump Administration has managed to reallocate some funds from other government departments and, earlier this year, earmarked \$3.6 billion in transfers from the Department of Defense.

Construction is now moving forward on multiple fronts. Current projections are to have approximately 450 miles completed in strategic locations by the end of 2020. By way of comparison, 450 miles is roughly equivalent to the driving distance between Calgary and Fort McMurray.

The new border wall systems include steel bollard walls, adjacent roads, lighting and electronic security.

In addition to building wall systems, Trump has worked out an arrangement with Mexico to assign a large contingent of its military personnel – reportedly 27,000 in number – to curtail the flow of migrants. Moreover, Trump has obtained the cooperation of the Northern Triangle countries – El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala – toward stemming migration.

In September 2019, the Trump Administration announced that migrant families apprehended at the border would no longer be allowed – with some humanitarian and medical exceptions – to enter the US under the immigration policy commonly known as "catch and release."

The new policy was outlined in a statement issued by DHS as follows: "If migrant family units do not claim fear of return, they will be quickly returned to their country of origin, in close collaboration with Central American countries. If they do claim fear, they will generally be returned to Mexico under the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP)."

Under the MPP, the US government sends asylum-seeking migrants to Mexico, where they reside as they wait for court dates in the US to pursue their claims for protection.

Earlier in the same month, the US Supreme Court, by a vote of 7-2, allowed the administration to implement a rule requiring migrants to first seek asylum in "a third country"; in other words, the country through which they traveled to get to the United States.

If Donald Trump had not been elected in 2016, it is likely that the Democrats would have continued to move toward a policy of open borders, augmented by an increasing number of sanctuary cities.

Cutting Regulations and Government Overreach

At the end of President Trump's first fiscal year in office, the Competitive Enterprise Institute stated: "Trump ends fiscal year as America's least-regulatory president since Reagan."

The CEI argues that getting rid of unneeded regulations may be the single most effective stimulus to economic growth that is available to the federal government. As the CEI notes, Trump froze regulations early in his term, advocating that up to 70 percent of regulations were simply unnecessary. He set a tone, and he's lived up to it. One graphic measure is this: The Federal Register, the bible of federal rules, peaked at a record high 95,894 pages under President Obama in 2016. By the end of 2017, under President Trump, it stood at 61,308 pages.

Tax Reform

In December 2017, President Trump signed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act into law providing the biggest tax cuts and reforms in American history.

The Treasury Department projected that 9 in 10 American workers would see an increase in their paychecks.

The Act cuts the corporate tax rate from 35 percent – the highest in the developed world – to 21 percent, allowing American businesses to be more competitive in global markets.

The Act also includes a one-time incentive for US-based companies that do business overseas to bring those profits back to the United States. A one-time repatriation of cash will be taxed at 15.5 percent and repatriated non-cash assets will be taxed at 8 percent. Over time, this provision is expected to result in hundreds of billions of dollars flowing back to the USA.

Increased Domestic Manufacturing

During eight years under the Obama Administration, the US economy lost approximately 220,000 manufacturing jobs (Bureau of Labor Statistics).

At a town hall in June 2016, President Obama stated that some manufacturing jobs “are just not going to come back.” He went on to mock then-candidate Trump by saying he’d need a “magic wand” to make good on this manufacturing job promises.

To date under the Trump Administration, the US economy has added more than 500,000 manufacturing jobs.

Low Unemployment

The US unemployment rate decreased to 3.5 percent in September 2019. The last time the rate was this low was in December 1969.

Unemployment rates among African Americans, Hispanic Americans and Asian Americans are at all-time lows.

USDA statistics indicate that since President Trump took office, approximately 6 million fewer people are applying for food stamps under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

New Trade Agreements

Shortly after his Inauguration, President Trump signed an executive order removing the US from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and he declared an end to the era of multinational trade agreements.

Subsequently, the Trump Administration negotiated and signed bilateral agreements with two of its major trading partners, South Korea and Japan.

A new trade agreement – the USMCA – was negotiated with Canada and Mexico to replace NAFTA. The USMCA was approved in principle by the three countries in late-2018. Despite broad support among both businesses and labor in the US for enacting the USMCA into law, the Democrat-controlled House of Representatives did not schedule a vote in the House until mid-December 2019. It is expected that USMCA legislation will be approved by the Senate and signed by President Trump in January 2020.

Withdrawal from Paris Climate Accord

On June 1, 2017, President Trump made good on another campaign promise by announcing that he intended to withdraw the USA from the Paris Climate Accord. Under the Accord, the United States had pledged to cut its greenhouse gas emissions 26 to 28 percent below 2005 levels by 2025 and commit up to \$3 billion in aid for poorer countries by 2020.

Trump's election campaign emphasized the expansion of US fossil fuel production. His "America First Energy Plan" focuses on reducing the price of oil, achieving "energy independence," tapping domestic oil sources, and creating energy-related jobs by decreasing regulation. He has also promised to end what he sees as wasteful payments to the United Nations Green Climate Fund. The United States has already paid \$1 billion into this fund, with \$2 billion more pledged.

In accordance with Article 28 of the Paris Accord, the earliest possible effective withdrawal date by the United States cannot be before November 4, 2020, four years after the agreement came into effect in the United States and, coincidentally, one day after the 2020 US presidential election. Until the withdrawal takes effect, the United States may be obligated to maintain its commitments under the agreement, including the requirement to continue reporting its emissions to the United Nations.

Oil and Natural Gas Self Sufficiency

Under the Trump Administration, US oil production has reached its highest level in American history. The United States is now the largest crude oil producer in the world

making it far less vulnerable to OPEC market interventions and geopolitical events in the Middle East.

When Trump assumed office in January 2017, the US was importing approximately 5 million barrels per day of crude oil and petroleum products. Today, that large deficit has been eliminated. During September 2019, the US exported 89,000 more barrels of crude oil and refined petroleum products a day than it imported, marking the first full month of a positive oil trade balance since the mid-1940s.

In addition, the US has become a net natural gas exporter for the first time in six decades and is expanding LNG facilities to increase exports to Western European and Asian countries.

As part of his National Security Strategy, President Trump also gained approval to open up a portion of the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) to energy exploration. Democrats and environmental activist groups have been fighting to prevent ANWR from being developed for oil production since the 1970s.

Increased NATO Funding

NATO member nations agreed in 2014 to spend two percent of their gross domestic products on defense by 2024. NATO officials have indicated that only seven countries – the US, the United Kingdom, Poland, Greece, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – met that threshold in 2018.

In his first NATO meeting in Brussels in May 2017, President Trump demanded that European allies increase their defense spending in line with the 2014 agreement.

In January of 2019, Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg stated that the alliance had heard Mr. Trump's call for non-US members to shoulder a greater financial burden "loud and clear" and that allies are "stepping up." Mr. Stoltenberg said member states had agreed to add \$100 billion to defense budgets over the next two years.

In a joint press conference with President Trump on December 3, 2019, NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg stated: "I'm looking forward to celebrate the 70th anniversary of our alliance together with all the other leaders, today and tomorrow. We are making real progress, most importantly on the burden sharing. And your leadership on defense spending is having a real impact. Since 2016, Canada and European allies have added \$130 billion more to the defense budgets, and this number will increase to 400 billion US dollars by 2024. This is unprecedented. This is making NATO stronger. And it shows that this Alliance is adapting, responding when the world is changing."

Revamping Department of Veterans Affairs

The Trump Administration inherited a “rats nest” at Veterans Affairs with a bloated bureaucracy and multitudinous examples of theft, neglect and patient abuse.

In June 2017, Trump signed into law the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017, allowing for civil servants within the Department to be fired for corruption and incompetence.

According to reporting in the Washington Examiner, more than 4,000 VA employees were removed, demoted, or suspended by October of 2018.

A year later, on August 28, 2019, VP Mike Pence posted on his Twitter account: “today more than 7,600 VA employees have been fired for negligent behavior. The era of abuse at the VA is over!”

In June of 2018, Trump President Trump signed the VA Mission Act facilitating military veterans' access to private-sector health care, should they choose to seek medical care outside of that provided by the Department of Veteran Affairs. The VA Mission Act also ordered an inventory of the Department's more than 1,100 facilities with a long-term view to trimming excess.

Protecting Individual and Religious Rights and Freedoms

Against a backdrop of unprecedented antipathy toward Christianity in America, Donald Trump is arguably the most faith-friendly president in US history.

Less than four months after his inauguration, on May 4, 2017, President Trump signed an Executive Order entitled Promoting Free Speech and Religious Liberty, a framework document designed to “guide the executive branch in formulating and implementing policies with implications for the religious liberty of persons and organizations in America, and to further compliance with the Constitution and with applicable statutes and Presidential Directives.”

Under the framework of this Executive Order, a number of new rules have been enacted, including the following:

- In May of 2019, the Trump administration issued a new rule that gives health care workers leeway to refuse to provide services like abortion, sterilization or assisted suicide, if they cite a religious or conscientious objection.

The rule, issued by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), is designed to protect the religious rights of health care providers and religious institutions. According to a statement issued by HHS's Office for Civil Rights, the new rule affirms existing conscience protections established by Congress.

HHS also changed the Office for Civil Rights' mission statement to highlight its focus on protecting religious freedom. Previously, the website said the office's mission was to "improve the health and well-being of people across the nation" and to ensure people have equal access to health care services provided by HHS. But the new statement repositions the OCR as a law enforcement agency that enforces civil rights laws, and conscience and religious freedom laws, and "protects that exercise of religious beliefs and moral convictions by individuals and institutions."

- In the final hours of his administration, President Barack Obama imposed a new requirement through the Department of Health and Human Services, in essence mandating that any organization working with HHS must accept same-sex marriage and an individual's professed gender identity.

This requirement has been used to try to prevent faith-based adoption and foster care providers from being able to serve needy children, especially the over 440,000 children in the nation's foster care system. The Obama regulations have been the cause of litigation, even in states with laws protecting faith-based agencies' ability to operate. Some of the faith-based agencies being targeted have been helping children for a century or more and their skill and expertise in caring for children, finding loving homes and foster parents, and engaging their local communities are unparalleled.

In December of 2019, the Trump Administration's Department of Health and Human Services announced that they are removing this burdensome requirement imposed by President Obama because it discriminates against faith-based organizations.

- In May of 2016, President Obama issued a "transgender" policy through his Justice and Education Departments. In a "Dear Colleague" letter to schools, the Obama Administration said schools "must not treat a transgender student differently from the way it treats other students of the same gender identity." The policy extended from bathroom facilities and locker rooms to sports teams and single-sex classes.

In its directive, the Obama Administration asserted that Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which bans sex discrimination in public schools, also bans transgender discrimination as a form of sex discrimination, and warned that breaking the rules could cost federal funding.

Less than two months into the first term of his presidency, Donald Trump rescinded Obama's "transgender" federal order.

Separately, and more recently, in May of 2019, the House of Representatives passed the Equality Act (H.R. 5) with unanimous support of the Democrat Party caucus. Among other things, this bill proposes that all publicly funded schools in America be required to ensure that biological males who self-identify as females can compete against female athletes and share publicly accessible bathrooms, locker rooms and showers with them.

This outrageous bill will not pass through the Senate and, even if it did, President Donald Trump – unlike his predecessor – would not sign it into law.

Pro-Life Administrative Actions

Three days after his Inauguration, on January 23, 2017, President Donald Trump signed an executive order to defund International Planned Parenthood.

When pro-abortion former President Barack Obama took office, he overturned a policy that prevented funding of groups that promote or perform abortions overseas. The Mexico City Policy covered over \$400 million in federal funds, part of which flowed to the abortion businesses International Planned Parenthood and Marie Stopes International for their foreign efforts.

Although the pro-life policy had been in place during the entirety of the Bush administration, Obama rescinded it on his first week in office. Named for a 1984 population conference where President Reagan initially announced it, the Mexico City Policy made it so family planning funds could only go to groups that would agree to not do abortions or lobby foreign nations to overturn their pro-life laws.

President Trump's Executive Order to reinstate the Mexico City Policy stops taxpayer funding of groups that perform and promote abortions overseas but does not stop non-abortion international assistance. The order ensures US foreign aid will continue to go to health care and humanitarian relief in the millions of dollars but it will not subsidize abortion overseas.

The Trump administration can't unilaterally defund the entirety of Planned Parenthood's federal funds, which come from multiple sources and amount to over \$550 million authorized by Congress. However, in March of 2019, President Trump signed an administrative rule which would partially defund the Planned Parenthood abortion business and deprive it of as much as \$60 million in taxpayer dollars. The Protect Life Rule prohibits entities from receiving Title X funding if they run an abortion business at the same facility as their Title X-funded family planning organization.

Title X funds are supposed to be used to help low-income women and men receive birth control, cancer screenings and other health care services. While the tax money cannot be used to pay for abortions, it indirectly funds Planned Parenthood's vast abortion business. The administration's changes to Title X family planning grants have angered

the abortion chain Planned Parenthood, prompting a lawsuit, but they provide hope for life-affirming pregnancy centers, which will be able to compete with the abortion giant for the federal funds.

In July of 2019, a federal appeals court ruled that President Trump can partially defund Planned Parenthood while the abortion business' lawsuit against his administration's new rule moves forward.

Prison Reform

On December 21, 2018, President Trump signed into law the First Step Act, a bipartisan bill that passed the Senate by a vote of 87–12, reflecting growing concerns on both the left and the right about the personal and fiscal costs of mass incarceration, a legacy of the decades-old war on drugs.

Before the signing, President Trump referred to the case of Alice Johnson, a grandmother who was sentenced to life in prison in 1996 for her role in a Memphis cocaine trafficking organization. Earlier in the year, the President had commuted Johnson's sentence after learning she had served 22 years and had exhibited exemplary behavior in prison but still had 28 years on her sentence. Trump believed the crime she had committed was "not worth 50 years in prison."

The First Step Act reduces mandatory minimum sentences and expands credits for inmates who participate in "evidence-based recidivism-reduction programs", allowing them to leave prison more quickly. Inmates are encouraged to participate in vocational training, educational coursework and faith-based programs like Prison Fellowship to prepare them for life after prison.

The First Step Act was modeled after successful reforms that have taken place in states like Georgia and Texas. In pushing for passage of the bill, criminal justice advocates pointed out that some of the same reforms that are in the First Step Act have helped Texas reduce its crime to its lowest rate in decades, close eight prisons and save billions of dollars.

Although some critics have questioned how much of an impact the First Step Act will have, supporters say it is the "most consequential criminal justice bill in a generation."

"The strong and effective leadership of conservatives made these reforms possible," Pat Nolan, the director of the American Conservative Union Foundation's Center for Criminal Justice Reform and former Prison Fellowship executive, said in a statement. "As a result, inmates will leave prison prepared to be good parents, good employees, and good neighbors. And our communities will be safer."

Worker Training

On July 19, 2018, President Trump signed an Executive Order establishing the National Council for the American Worker. Comprised of senior Administration officials, this Council is charged with developing a national strategy for training and retraining the workers needed across high-demand industries.

Working directly with the National Council for the American Worker, President Trump's Executive Order also established the American Workforce Policy Advisory Board, co-chaired by Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross and Advisor to the President Ivanka Trump – and comprised of leaders from the public, private, education, labor, and not-for-profit sectors. This Board's mission is to ensure all Americans can benefit from the nation's historic economic boom and record low employment rates.

As part of the National Council for the American Worker, the Trump Administration is asking companies and trade groups throughout the country to sign a Pledge to America's Workers – committing to expand programs that educate, train, and reskill American workers from high-school age to near-retirement.

Since President Trump signed the Executive Order, more than 300 companies and organizations have signed the Pledge, contributing to over 12 million new education and training opportunities for American students and workers over the next five years.

Promoting Free Speech on University Campuses

On March 21, 2019, President Trump signed an Executive Order entitled Improving Free Inquiry, Transparency, and Accountability at Colleges and Universities. Among other things, this Executive Order promotes free speech on college campuses by threatening colleges with the loss of federal research funding if they do not protect those rights.

Several months later, Charlie Kirk, President of Turning Point USA, posted the following on his Twitter account: "I just want to compliment the President of the United States for signing that historic Executive Order a couple of months ago saying that any school that does not uphold the First Amendment Rights of its students will lose Federal Funding. We have seen a huge change in how the Universities interact with us as a national and local student organization. Our students feel empowered. There's a movement happening on these campuses like I've never seen before. When you have 3000 students wanting to get into an event that couldn't get in, that's pretty remarkable!"

Economic Opportunity Zones

In 2018, President Trump signed an Executive Order establishing the White House Opportunity and Revitalization Council. The Council is chaired by the Secretary of

Housing and Urban Development, Ben Carson, and is comprised of 16 Federal agencies.

The Council is engaging all levels of government to assist leaders, investors, and entrepreneurs in utilizing Opportunity Zone incentives to revitalize low-income communities.

More than 8,760 communities in all 50 States, the District of Columbia, and 5 Territories have been designated as Opportunity Zones. Nearly 35 million Americans live in Opportunity Zone communities.

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, signed by President Trump in 2017, made provision for incentivizing long-term investments in low-income communities across the country. These incentives offer capital gains tax relief on new investments in designated Opportunity Zones.

Opportunity Zones are anticipated to spur \$100 billion in private capital investment.