

Republicans Pledge to Give Ukraine Aid Tough Scrutiny With House Control

Description

- Kevin McCarthy has vowed no 'blank check' given inflation
- Biden administration works to keep up support as war goes on

Republican lawmakers are set to give closer scrutiny to financial support for Ukraine once they take control of the House of Representatives in January, risking a showdown with the Biden administration and raising questions about the long-term US commitment as the war drags on.

House Minority leader Kevin McCarthy, who's set to become speaker, said last month that Republicans aren't going to write a "blank check" for Ukraine, especially given rising inflation at home. Others, like Georgia Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene, have called for a total cutoff. The US has contributed about \$18 billion in security assistance and weapons since Russia invaded Ukraine in February.

While Greene is unlikely to get her wish, such demands will add to pressure on Republican leaders and create headaches for the Biden administration, which has put a focus on unity among western allies to keep money and weapons flowing to President Volodymyr Zelenskiy's military. While President Joe Biden has ways to work around recalcitrant lawmakers, their demands will make allies uneasy.

"We should immediately stop payments to Ukraine and begin a thorough audit of the \$60 billion that Joe Biden and Congress have already sent there," Representative Thomas Massie, a Kentucky Republican, tweeted on Nov. 14 as Republican control of the House became more clear.

With ballots in a few races still being counted, the party gained the bare 218 seats needed for control on Wednesday night, according to the Associated Press. The narrowness of the Republican majority means that Greene, Massie and others seeking to cut funding to Ukraine may have leverage, making life more complicated for those Republicans who want to keep the aid flowing.

Biden will have other Republicans on his side, including Representative Michael McCaul, who is set to take control of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. In the Senate, where Democrats will retain a narrow majority, Republican Leader Mitch McConnell has said his party wants to send Ukraine more assistance, not less.

Qualms about the scale of support for Ukraine also may resurface from the left of the Democratic Party. In October, a letter from a group of 30 progressive House Democrats urged Biden to pursue negotiations with Russia to bring about a diplomatic end to the war in Ukraine. Within hours, after criticism from other Democrats, they backpedaled and affirmed support for Biden's strategy.

In an interview with Bloomberg News, Ukraine's economy minister, Yulia Svyrydenko said she believed the US would keep up financial support for its fight against Russia regardless of who's in control.

“We really appreciate your bipartisan support,” she said. “We’re not worried. Ukraine fights for very concrete rights and values. I think the US will support until we get victory.”

The divisions about Ukraine highlight broader shifts in sentiment about national security among Republicans.

Once known as the more hawkish party, many Republicans under President Donald Trump sought to dial back US commitments overseas, seeking to remove US troops from Syria and Somalia and expressing skepticism about international institutions such as the European Union. Trump even threatened to withdraw the US from NATO.

One person familiar with Republican leaders’ thinking said the party is focused on oversight. The person, who asked not to be identified discussing private party deliberations, said there’s a growing feeling that Zelenskiy is demanding too much money and too many weapons.

GOP lawmakers also have concerns about corruption in Ukraine, particularly given acknowledgments that the US embassy in the country lacks the resources to track the funds disbursed to Kyiv.

Partly in response to those concerns, the State Department announced a plan in late October to make sure weapons systems intended for Ukraine aren’t diverted. That push involved bolstering security for US-provided weapons at storage and transfer points.

by Courtney McBride

Category

1. Army-Wars-Conflict Zones-Military Tech.
2. Main
3. Politics-Geopolitics-Gov.-Events

Date Created

11/17/2022