

June 18, 1975

AGENDA

Summary of suggestions agreed to by consensus at the meeting on House Leadership, held June 17.

1. Key Democratic Program. The first ingredient in a coherent Democratic position on national issues is a carefully thought out and constructive program, including, at a minimum, sound programs on jobs, energy, and agriculture. The leadership (with full consultation with members as suggested in point 2) should decide which issues are top priority Democratic votes and inform the members accordingly. In the course of each session the leadership would select critical votes for inclusion on their list for compilation at the end of the session. These lists (hopefully restricted only to the most urgent and significant matters) would rate each member's support. On these issues the leadership would make it clear that members, if at all possible, should accede to their request for support. COPE, UAW, Senior Citizens, and other lobbying groups use such a system to good effect.
2. Closer Leadership Communication. To arrive at a key program that represents the Democratic members' thinking, there must be a constant and free-wheeling exchange of views between the leadership and the members, whether informally in committee, on the floor, or formally in caucuses and other meetings. The leadership must be fully aware of members views and should attempt to obtain a consensus before floor votes to avoid the kinds of setbacks experienced on the energy bill.
3. Strengthening the Whip Structure. Several suggestions have been made to strengthen the whip system. It was suggested that a better count system be devised to allow for advanced understanding of likely vote outcomes. There is a sense that on critical issues there are still problems with undecided votes, potential absenteeism, or misleading information. An effective whip system would also be a conduit for vote strategies in relation to the key Democratic program or to specific issues in which there is obvious confusion, i.e. the recent debt ceiling bill.
4. Designated Spokesman. Whenever a critical issue arises to which there is a need for a public Congressional response, the Speaker should designate a spokesman to address the national media. This spokesman may be the Speaker himself, the Majority Leader, Whip, etc., or someone versed in the subject matter, i.e. Tom Foley on the farm bill veto, Patsy Mink or Mo Udall on the strip mining veto, Al Ullman on the energy bills, Henry Reuss on the expected housing bill veto, etc. This spokesman would be charged with setting the public record straight as to the Administration positions. We understand that efforts are being made to set up such a system under John Brademas, and would request freshman involvement in this process.
5. Roll Call Decisions. There should be a decision prior to each day's session as to those votes on which the Democrats will demand a roll call (in addition to any roll call requested by a member). The Republicans seem to know exactly the issues on which to call for a roll call, and those are generally geared to future political use. We should do the same.
6. Five-Day Work Week. The five-day work week rule should be inviolate, first, so we can structure our schedules accordingly, and second, so we can do more work now and avoid a crush at the end of the session. There is also sentiment that the July recess be shortened or cancelled until such time as there is a successful conclusion to the energy bill consideration.

Other suggestions and feelings were voiced at last night's meeting which have not been incorporated here. Hopefully, they will be expressed by the members at this afternoon's session. We feel that the above represents a constructive approach to what we consider to be a serious problem affecting not only the Congress but our country and prospects for Democratic success in 1976.

PAUL E. TSONGAS
Member of Congress

TIMOTHY E. WIRTH
Member of Congress