

New Congress, New Investigations

Early Saturday morning, after 15 rounds of voting, Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif. 20th District) finally clinched the speaker's gavel and swore in members of the 118th Congress. The Republican-led Congress ushers in a new period of congressional investigations that will likely ensnare both corporations and former executive branch employees in a web of document subpoenas and depositions.

The rules package, passed Monday night, sets the stage for what the next two years have in store. The rules establish a new select subcommittee to perform a wide-ranging investigation of the coronavirus pandemic. Per the rules, the House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic is directed to investigate the effectiveness of relief programs created to address the pandemic, including reports of waste, fraud, or abuse in those programs. Corporations benefitting from pandemic relief programs may find themselves within the subcommittee's crosshairs. The subcommittee is also directed to investigate, among other things, the origins of COVID-19, the development of vaccines and treatments, the implementation of vaccination policies, and school closures.

Additionally, Tuesday afternoon, the House passed a resolution to create a select subcommittee on the "Weaponization of the Federal Government," to be led by Representative Jim Jordan (R-Ohio 4th District). The resolution gives the subcommittee broad authority to look into how the Justice Department and the F.B.I. investigate U.S. citizens, including in "ongoing criminal investigations." The subcommittee is expected to be used as a vehicle for the new Congress to scrutinize the Justice Department's investigations of President Trump's attempts to overturn the 2020 election and his handling of classified documents. The subcommittee is further authorized to investigate civil liberty violations and how federal agencies collect, analyze, and use information about U.S. citizens. Beyond reaching the executive branch, the subcommittee also plans to investigate corporations, including how corporations collect data on U.S. citizens and how corporations work with federal agencies to monitor online speech. The resolution enables the subcommittee to receive the same classified intelligence information that is available to the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.

In his first speech as Speaker, McCarthy referred to the new investigations, stating, "We will hold the swamp accountable, from the withdrawal of Afghanistan to the origins of COVID to the weaponization of the F.B.I." McCarthy further confirmed that subpoenas are forthcoming, stating, "Let me be very clear: We will use the power of the purse and the power of the subpoena to get the job done."



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