



Chuck Schumer Seeks “Common Ground” With Trump

During a press interview at his office on Friday, New York Democratic Senator Charles Schumer (shown) [said](#) that he had spoken two or three times with President-elect Donald Trump: “He’s called. He’s friendly. The word is that he thinks he can work with me, but we’ll see. The jury’s [still] out.”



Schumer, just reelected for his fourth term as senator, will become the Senate minority leader in the 115th Congress as Harry Reid, the present Senate minority leader, is retiring. The *Wall Street Journal* characterized the interview as an effort by Schumer to seek “common ground” with Trump. Other members of the press weren’t so charitable.

Schumer was feisty, still smarting from the election in which the Democrats were expected to do much better in the Senate than they did (the Democrats were defending just 10 seats while the Republicans were defending 24) — gaining just two seats and remaining the minority party with 48 seats compared to 52 for the Republicans. When asked about Trump’s promise to repeal ObamaCare, Schumer said Republicans “will rue the day. It’s a political nightmare for them. They’ll be like the dog that finally caught the bus.”

Schumer said his party would be “tough” on Senator Jeff Sessions during his nomination hearings to be the next U.S. attorney general. But he also said there is some common ground that he would use as a wedge to divide Republicans: removing favorable tax status for hedge fund managers’ incomes, investing heavily in infrastructure, and imposing tariffs as punishment for countries such as China who, said Schumer, are guilty of manipulating their currency to America’s detriment.

Other than that, there’s precious little “common ground” on issues which range from ObamaCare to Dodd-Frank, from tax cuts to the Second Amendment, and from a new Supreme Court justice to renegotiating the Iran nuclear deal and ending consideration of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

Tax cuts: Trump has declared his intention to cut corporate and personal income tax brackets substantially in a bid to make the United States more competitive and to invite multinational corporations to “repatriate” income they’re currently holding overseas. In that package Trump has said he would go along with taxing “carried interest” (a share of a partnership’s profits that go to the general partner) at regular income tax rates rather than at lower capital-gains rates. To Schumer, cutting tax rates for the “wealthy” is anathema.

Repeal of ObamaCare: Trump has repeatedly declared that Republicans must “repeal and replace” the national healthcare plan, while keeping in place a few of its pieces. Schumer has already declared that any attempt at repealing ObamaCare will cost Republicans dearly in future elections.



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Nomination of Senator Jeff Sessions as attorney general: Trump nominated Sessions for the position last week, to replace Loretta Lynch. Sessions' view of immigration is much tougher than that of the Obama administration, and Schumer has declared that Democrat senators will grill Sessions mercilessly on that difference. However, thanks to the "nuclear option" put in place by Schumer's predecessor (where it would take only 51 votes rather than 60 to shut down any attempted filibusters against Sessions by Democrats), Sessions could sail through the confirmation process in the Republican-controlled Senate.

Supreme Court nominee: Trump has made it clear that he will nominate one of his already pre-selected individuals for the position, while Schumer has said, "We [Democrats] cannot afford to see Justice Stevens replaced by another Roberts, or Justice Ginsburg by another Alito." Although the "nuclear option" doesn't apply to Supreme Court nominees, Schumer will have a tough time keeping Trump from gaining Senate approval for his nominee (who is likely to support the Court's previous decisions in *Heller* and *McDonald*), because of the risk of earning the moniker "obstructionist," which Reid and Schumer have used for years to describe Republican reticence to enact Democrats' agenda.

The Second Amendment: Schumer's track record in opposition to the Second Amendment is legendary, from supporting the Brady Bill and the Assault Weapons Ban in 1994 to being one of only 16 senators to vote against the Vitter Amendment. That amendment, passed in 2006, prohibits the confiscation of legally possessed firearms during a disaster such as Hurricane Katrina that inundated New Orleans. In an egregious overreach, New Orleans Chief of Police Eddie Compass ordered police and National Guard units to confiscate firearms from citizens who remained in the area following the hurricane.

Renegotiating drug prices under Medicare:

Trump has said the government could save billions of dollars if Medicare was allowed to negotiate drug prices directly with pharmaceutical companies, with which Schumer agrees. But for Schumer any attempt to cut Medicare funding in any manner, shape or form, is a non-starter.

Dodd-Frank: On Donald Trump's transition team's website appears this: "[Dodd-Frank is] a sprawling and complex piece of legislation that has unleashed hundreds of new rules and several new bureaucratic agencies [which Trump promises to dismantle and replace with] new policies to encourage economic growth and job creation." On November 20, Schumer told NBC's *Meet the Press* that if Trump tried, "we have 60 votes to block him" including at least 12 Republicans who think Dodd-Frank should remain in place. Added Schumer: "He should not even try to think about repealing Dodd-Frank. We will have enough votes to beat that back."

Immigration: One of the key issues Trump used to capture the presidency is closing the borders and deporting criminal aliens. Schumer, on the other hand, was one of the "Gang of Eight" pushing in 2013 for a "path to citizenship" for illegals already in the country.

Executive Orders:

Trump has already threatened to repeal and neuter some of President Obama's more egregious executive orders. Schumer isn't likely to push back when he is reminded of his position taken following the November 2014 mid-term elections. Republicans expanded their majority in the House and took control of the Senate, which caused Schumer to declare, "The president has no choice but to take executive action where he can, wherever it's legally allowed, to help reform the immigration system. We cannot put up with this constant obstruction. We need to fix our broken immigration system." Now that



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the shoe is on the other foot with a Republican president who will face an obstructionist Democratic Senate, Schumer is trapped by his own declarations.

There are other issues not covered here, and other issues that will come up over the next two to four years. But Schumer erased any chance of finding common ground with Trump when he told George Stephanopoulos on ABC on Sunday: “When we oppose Trump on values or [his] presidency takes a dark, divisive turn, we’re going to do it tooth and nail.” In response Trump tweeted: “I have always had a good relationship with Chuck Schumer. He is far smarter than Harry Reid and has the ability to get things done.”

Photo: AP Images

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