



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on December 16, 2010

## Congressional Agenda for Today, December 16

Today, the House of Representatives is expected to vote on the tax cut extensions approved by the Senate yesterday by a vote of 81 to 19. The House has allotted three hours for general debate and is expected to introduce a single amendment to the bill, one that would change the estate tax provision of the bill, believed to be “too generous” to the rich. While the House of Representatives is hammering out the details of the tax cut legislation, the Senate begins debate on the START treaty.



Yesterday, the Senate passed the tax cut bill by an overwhelming majority. Of the nay votes were 13 Democrats, five Republicans and one Independent. The passed measure extends jobless benefits for an additional 13 months, and temporarily extends the tax cuts for another two years, while providing a payroll tax cut of two percentage points. It also sets the estate tax exemption at \$5 million per person and \$10 per couple.

Democrats in the House of Representatives are interested in lowering the estate tax exemption from \$5 million to \$3.5 million, and raising tax assets above that threshold to 45 percent instead of the 35 percent approved by the Senate.

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If the legislation is altered in any way, it returns to the Senate for another vote. If the altered bill fails to pass in the Senate, the House must then vote on the bill passed by the Senate. A majority “Yes” vote is required in the House and then moved to the Presidents desk for signature.

Also for today, members of the House Judiciary Committee will be deliberating on the possibility of prosecuting Julian Assange, head of Wikileaks, under the Espionage Act. They will be meeting with constitutional and legal experts to determine if prosecution under the Act is possible, and are expected to hear testimony from Ralph Nader, Green Party presidential nominee.

Of the Senates agenda, Fox News writes:

The Senate will spend the day debating the START nuclear weapons reduction treaty. The deal with Russia requires 67 votes for ratification, and has garnered support from both sides of the aisle. Democratic Senators, led by Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire, hold a 3:15 p.m. ET press conference to push for a vote on the agreement before the new year begins.

[This morning](#), Arizona’s Republican Senator Jon Kyl also took the opportunity to introduce a number of arguments against the \$1.1 trillion spending bill as morning business.

Majority Whip Senator Dick Durbin defended the bill against Kyls issues, including the overbearing length of 2000 pages, earmarks found in the bill, the amount of time provided in order to deliberate on the bill, and the amount of money the bill costs.

Republican senators are [threatening](#) to take extreme measures in order to halt the passage of the bill.



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By forcing Senate clerks to read the full text of the 2,000 page bill aloud, Republicans can virtually run out the clock on the lame duck session.

Senator Jim DeMint explains, Democrats haven't given Republicans or the American people time to read the bill, but Ill join with other Republican colleagues to force them to read it on the Senate floor.

Politico explains, Such a tactic is rarely employed, but any senator can force a full reading of legislation, which is usually skipped by unanimous consent.

The lame duck session was scheduled to end on Friday, December 17th, but with so much unfinished business, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid has threatened to extend the lame duck session past the Christmas holiday. The new session of Congress does not convene until January 4.

In addition to the items debated in the House and the Senate, Timothy Geithner, Treasury Secretary, will be testifying before the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP) about foreclosure prevention programs today as well.



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