



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on November 28, 2018

Nancy Pelosi's Real Challenge Comes January 3

For Nancy Pelosi, getting the endorsement of Democratic leaders on Wednesday for speaker of the House in the 116th Congress was easy. However, an increasingly noisy chorus of Democratic Party youngsters [have promised to make the vote](#) before the whole House on January 3 much closer. With 233 Democrats in the House, Pelosi will have to secure 218 of them to obtain the speaker's gavel once again.



At first blush, her opponents are making a good point: Depending on which day the poll is taken, there are between 15 and 30 Democrats who have said they won't be voting for her in January. The reasons? She's too old and not progressive enough (this despite a rating on *The New American's* Freedom Index of between zero and 30 percent during her 16 terms in office).

Her opponents have several problems though, some of which won't be going away before January. There has been no clear opponent to challenge Pelosi for the speakership. And the No. 2 and No. 3 Democrats in the current house — Steny Hoyer (Md.) and Jim Clyburn (S.C.) — suffer from the same malady as Pelosi: They are age 79 and 78, respectively. Pelosi turns 79 next March.

Others prefer to use the term “experienced” instead of “old,” and Pelosi's long history of successful wielding of political power over the past 16 congresses representing San Francisco is impressive. Most impressive was her signature success in passing ObamaCare. She shredded her oath of office where she solemnly swore that she would “support and defend the Constitution of the United States,” that she would “bear true faith and allegiance to the same,” that she took on this obligation “freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion,” ending with “So help me God.”

But when she was pressed by a reporter from CNS News, “Madam Speaker, where specifically does the Constitution grant Congress the authority to enact an individual health insurance mandate?” she dismissed the question famously by responding, “Are you serious? Are you serious?” Later, Pelosi's spokesman, Nadeam Eishami, told the CNS News reporter that “That is not a serious question.”

During the fight over ObamaCare, Pelosi articulated her determination to do whatever was necessary to get the bill passed, constitutional or not: “You go through the gate. If the gate's closed, you go over the fence. If the fence is too high, we'll pole-vault in. If that doesn't work, we'll parachute in. But we're going to get health care reform passed.”

And indeed she did, behind closed doors. Then, before the House vote, she claimed that “we have to pass the bill so that you can find out what's in it.”

The day after the 2018 midterm elections that flipped the House to Democrat control, Pelosi got support for retaking the House gavel from a surprising source: the president. Trump said, “I think she deserves it. She's fought long and hard, she's a very capable person, and, you know, you have other people shooting at her trying to take over the speakership.” Trump doubled down on November 17, tweeting, “I can get Nancy Pelosi as many votes as she wants in order for her to be Speaker of the House. She deserves this victory, she has earned it — but there are those in her party who are trying to take it



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away. She will win!”

Pelosi challenged Trump indirectly when she responded to his comments at a press conference, “I don’t think anybody deserves anything. It’s not about what you have done, it’s what you can do. And I think I’m the best person to go forward, to unify, to negotiate.”

Few commentators picked up on her challenge: that she considers herself qualified to negotiate with the Negotiator-in-Chief. Perhaps she forgot that although her party will control the House come January, Republicans extended their lead in the Senate, virtually guaranteeing that Pelosi’s House will accomplish little if anything with her at the helm. With her national favorability rating currently much lower than Trump’s, the president will likely relish using his Twitter blowtorch with his 65 million followers to fry Pelosi at every opportunity as he ramps up his reelection campaign for 2020. With her back at the Speaker’s podium, she could be his ticket to reelection.

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