

# Mr. Trump comes to Washington

By JULIE PACE

AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — President-elect Donald Trump took a triumphant tour of the nation's capital Thursday, holding a cordial White House meeting with President Barack Obama, sketching out priorities with Republican congressional leaders and taking in the majestic view from where he'll be sworn in to office.

Trump's meeting with Obama spanned 90 minutes, longer than originally scheduled. Obama said he was "encouraged" by Trump's willingness to work with his team during the transition of power, and the Republican called the president a "very good man."

"I very much look forward to dealing with the president in the future, including his counsel," Trump said from the Oval Office. He'll begin occupying the office on Jan. 20.

While Trump noted that he and Obama had never met before, their political histories will forever be linked. Trump spent years perpetrating the lie that Obama was born outside the United States. The president campaigned aggressively against Trump during the 2016 campaign, warning that his election would put the republic at risk.

But at least publicly, the two men appeared to put aside their animosity. As the meeting concluded and journalists scrambled out of the Oval Office, Obama smiled at his successor and explained the unfolding scene.

"We now are going to want to do everything we can to help you succeed because if you succeed the country succeeds," Obama said.

From the White House, Trump headed to Capitol Hill for meetings with House Speaker Paul Ryan of Wisconsin and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky to discuss the GOP legislative agenda. Ryan, who holds the most powerful post in Congress, was a sometime critic of Trump and never campaigned with the nominee.

Emerging from the meetings, Trump sketched out priorities for his presidency.

"We're going to move very strongly on immigration," he said. "We will move very strongly on health care. And we're looking at jobs. Big league jobs."

Ryan took Trump on a tour of the Speaker's Balcony overlooking the National Mall, the scene of Trump's upcoming inauguration. The view, Trump said, was "really, really beautiful."

Trump was also beginning the process of putting together his White House team. Republican National Committee Chairman Reince Priebus, who worked his way into Trump's inner circle during the election, and top campaign official Kellyanne Conway were emerging



House Speaker Paul Ryan of Wis., left, shows President-elect Donald Trump, his wife Melania and Vice President-elect Mike Pence the view of the inaugural stand that is being built and Pennsylvania Avenue, from the Speaker's Balcony on Capitol Hill in Washington, Thursday. AP Photo/Alex Brandon



President-elect Donald Trump and his wife Melania walk with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Ky. on Capitol Hill, Thursday after a meeting. AP Photo/Alex Brandon

as possible picks for White House chief of staff, according to two people familiar with the transition planning.

A third person said conservative media executive Steve Bannon was also in the mix, though others insisted Bannon would not have a White House role. Those involved in the process insisted on anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the planning publicly. A decision on chief of staff is expected in the coming days.

First lady Michelle Obama met privately in the White House residence with Trump's wife, Melania, while Vice President Joe Biden saw Vice President-elect Mike Pence late

Thursday. Trump's team was said to be sketching a robust role for Pence, an experienced Washington hand, that would include both domestic and foreign policy responsibilities.

Obama and Trump met alone, with no staff present, White House press secretary Josh Earnest told reporters following the discussion.

"The two men did not relitigate their differences in the Oval Office," Earnest said. "We're on to the next phase."

Trump traveled to Washington from New York on his private jet, breaking with protocol by not bringing journalists in his motorcade or on his plane to document his historic visit to the White House.



President Barack Obama and President-elect Donald Trump shake hands following their meeting in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, Thursday. AP Photo/Pablo Martinez Monsivais

Trump was harshly critical of the media during his campaign and for a time banned news organizations whose coverage he disliked from his events.

At the White House, Obama chief of staff Denis McDonough was seen walking along the South Lawn driveway with Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law. A handful of Trump aides trailed them.

The show of civility at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue contrasted with postelection scenes of protests across a politically divided country. Demonstrators from New England to the heartland and the West Coast vented against the election winner on Wednesday, chanting "Not my

president," burning a papier-mache Trump head, beating a Trump pinata and carrying signs that said "Impeach Trump."

Officials at the Pentagon and State Department said they had not yet been contacted.

As president-elect, Trump is entitled to the same daily intelligence briefing as Obama — including information on U.S. covert operations, information gleaned about world leaders and other data gathered by America's 17 intelligence agencies. The White House said it would organize two exercises involving multiple agencies to help Trump's team learn how to respond to major domestic incidents.

## BRIEFLY

### Protests continue around country

NEW YORK (AP) — Demonstrators in both red and blue states hit the streets for another day Thursday to express their outrage over Donald Trump's unexpected win, while the president-elect sniped back in a Twitter post.

Vocal demonstrations occurred from New York to Los Angeles and each typically drew a few hundred people, fewer than the thousands that gathered in various protests that surged after it became clear Trump had won Tuesday's election.

Late Thursday night, Trump went on Twitter to take on the protesters. Trump tweets: "Just had a very open and successful presidential election. Now professional protesters, incited by the media, are protesting. Very unfair!"

High-spirited high school students marched through San Francisco's downtown, chanting "not my president" and holding signs urging a Donald Trump eviction. They waved rainbow banners and Mexican flags, as bystanders in the heavily Democratic city high-fived the marchers from the sidelines.

"As a white, queer person, we need unity with people of color, we need to stand up," said Claire Bye, a 15-year-old sophomore at Academy High School. "I'm fighting for my rights as an LGBTQ person. I'm fighting for the rights of brown people, black people, Muslim people."

### Russia eyes better ties with Trump

MOSCOW (AP) — A top Russian diplomat and Vladimir Putin's spokesman said Thursday that Russian experts were in contact with some members of President-elect Donald Trump's staff during the presidential campaign, a period in which the United States accused Russia of hacking into Democratic Party emails systems.

A spokeswoman for Trump denied the assertion, but it raised the ongoing suspicions about the president-elect's relationship with Putin's government that had dogged his campaign with former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

Russia is hopeful that a Trump presidency will herald improved relations with the United States. But, in a sign of the cold realism that Putin is known for, Moscow is not betting on an immediate drastic turnaround in the strained relationship.

And while Trump himself has said he wants to be friends with Russia and join forces in the fight against terrorism, he has outlined few specifics as to how he would go about it. President Barack Obama began his presidency with a similar goal, only to see progress unravel over the conflicts in Ukraine and Syria.

Putin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told The Associated Press in an interview in New York that Russian experts had contacts with people in both the Trump and Clinton campaigns. He said such contacts are "quite natural, quite normal."

## What will happen to Obamacare?

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump's election ushers in a time of high anxiety for people with health insurance under President Barack Obama's law, which expanded coverage to millions but has struggled to find widespread public acceptance.

While repeal now seems likely, that may take Congress months. A replacement for the 2010 health care law could take even longer, and may retain some of its features. Republicans are saying they want to protect people who now are covered from losing health care in the shift. While Congress labors, look for the Trump administration to use its regulatory powers to make changes.

Voters "don't want Washington to fix Obamacare, they want to make health care affordable," said House Ways and Means Chairman Kevin Brady, R-Texas, whose committee oversees much of health care. "I'm confident we will have more truly affordable health care for just as many Americans."

"It's our goal to dismantle Obamacare and actually focus on lowering the cost of coverage for people," said Sen. John Barrasso, R-Wyo., a member of the Republican leadership. "It's a commitment on behalf of Congress and the president-elect to get this done."

The rhetoric may sound familiar, but the circumstances couldn't be more different. Up until now, repeated Republican attempts to repeal the Affordable Care Act have been practice runs. This will be real, and so will the consequences. Trump will have a four-year term in the White House, but Congress faces the voters again in two years.

With HealthCare.gov's sign-up season underway, there's little chance the program will come to a crashing halt. Still, that's not very reassuring for people like Lodiza LePore of Bennington, Vermont, a photographer who pays about \$80 a month for her policy. The coverage is skimpy, she says, but it's there if she has a health problem.

"I think they are just going to destroy everything Obama has done, and that's going to leave a lot of people with no

health care," said LePore. "It's going to turn this country into a Third World country."

As many as 30 million people could be affected. Most directly hit would be some 10 million who like LePore have private coverage through the law's subsidized markets, and about 9 million covered under its Medicaid expansion. Another 5 million to 9 million people who buy individual policies outside the health law markets are exposed to its ups and downs.

Republicans don't want to make millions uninsured, said Mike Leavitt, Health and Human Services secretary for former President George W. Bush. "There is a widely held aspiration that people have health insurance, and that the solution isn't simply to say that it's OK if some people don't," he said.

Can they deliver? There's no final GOP plan and no decisions have been made. But here's a look at some of the major pieces in a complex puzzle:

**REPEAL: THE 'EASY' PART?**  
Republicans don't have 60 votes in the Senate, so to pass a repeal bill they would have to use special budget-related procedures that allow a simple majority to work its will. There's a template for that in the GOP repeal bill that Obama vetoed this year. Trump would sign it.

But using the special procedures means Congress must first pass a budget, which can take several months. Going that route also would leave in place parts of the health care law that are not related to the budget.

Congress may delay the effective date of a repeal law to give it time to pass a replacement for the ACA.

**REPLACE: A CHANCE FOR BIPARTISANSHIP?**

"Obamacare's" requirement that individuals get insurance or face fines doesn't stand a chance, but other provisions would likely survive in a replacement bill. That includes keeping young adults on parental plans until age 26 and doing away with lifetime dollar limits on coverage.

Republicans also want to avoid a

return to the days when people were denied coverage because of medical problems. They would protect those who maintain "continuous" coverage and fund "high-risk" insurance pools for patients who fall through the cracks.

House Speaker Paul Ryan has proposed tax credits to help people buy health insurance.

Republicans and Democrats may also be able to find common ground on dealing with the health law's Medicaid expansion, which a number of GOP-led states have adopted. "Medicaid is going to be the crucial issue," said GOP economist Douglas Holtz-Eakin. "There is a practical political reality there."

Democrats are going to be striving to keep as many people covered as possible.

A replacement bill could take a couple of years to hash out.

**TRUMP UNILATERAL**  
While Congress labors away, expect the Trump administration to take administrative and regulatory actions to chip away at his predecessor's signature law, or reshape it.

Those could include making it harder for people to sign up for coverage outside of open-enrollment season, supporting legislation that would waive tax penalties for uninsured people in communities with no choice of insurers, or even supporting a lawsuit by GOP lawmakers that challenges some of the law's subsidies.

**'POTTERY BARN' RULE**  
The old retail store rule is "if you break it, you buy it." The same applies to health care. Obama and the Democrats have paid a political price for trying to fix the problems of the uninsured and having some of those fixes generate their own complications.

The same could happen to Republicans if they're not careful.

"If people get mad at you, they will find a way to get you," said GOP economist Gail Wilensky, a former Medicare administrator. "If you really miss the mark of where the people are, they will get you."