



AP Photo/Evan Vucci
President Donald Trump arrives for a New Year’s Eve gala at his Mar-a-Lago resort with first lady Melania Trump and their son Barron, Dec. 31 in Palm Beach, Fla.

Perils abroad, full plate at home as Trump opens second year

By CATHERINE LUCEY
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The glamour of his holiday break behind him, President Donald Trump returned to the White House on Monday night to face a hefty legislative to-do list, critical midterm elections and perilous threats abroad.

Trump started his second year in Washington after a lengthy sojourn at his private club in Palm Beach, Florida, capped by a New Year’s Eve bash. Before his departure for the capital, he fired angry tweets at Iran and Pakistan, slamming Islamabad for “lies & deceit” and saying the country had played U.S. leaders for “fools,” a reference to frustrations that Pakistan isn’t doing enough to control militants.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif tweeted that his government was preparing a response that “will let the world know the truth.”

Meantime, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said Monday the United States should be aware that his country’s nuclear forces are now a reality, not a future threat. To that, Trump only said: “We’ll see.”

The president is hoping for more legislative achievements after his pre-Christmas success on taxes. He plans to host Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky and House Speaker Paul Ryan of Wisconsin at Camp David next weekend to map out the 2018 legislative agenda.

Republicans are eager to make progress before attention shifts to the midterm elections. The GOP wants to hold House and Senate majorities in 2018, but must contend with Trump’s historic unpopularity and some recent Democratic wins.

The president concluded 2017 with his first major legislative achievement — a law to cut taxes, beginning this year, for corporations and individuals at an estimated cost of \$1.5 trillion added to the national debt over 10 years. The tax overhaul also will end the requirement, in 2019, that all Americans buy health insurance or pay a fine. That’s a key component of the Obama-era health law that that Republicans have been unable to repeal; other features of the law remain intact.

The White House has said

Trump will come forward with his long-awaited infrastructure plan in January. Trump has also said he wants to overhaul welfare and recently predicted Democrats and Republicans will “eventually come together” to develop a new health care plan.

Ryan has talked about overhauling Medicaid and Medicare and other safety-net programs, but McConnell has signaled an unwillingness to go that route unless there’s Democratic support for any changes. Republicans will have just a 51-49 Senate majority — well shy of the 60 votes needed to pass most bills — giving leverage to Democrats.

Congress also has to deal with a backlog from 2017. It must agree on a spending bill by Jan. 19 to avert a partial government shutdown.

Lawmakers also have unfinished business on additional aid to for hurricane victims, lifting the debt ceiling, extending a children’s health insurance program and extending protections for immigrants brought to the U.S. illegally as children. Trump has said he wants money for a

border wall in exchange for protecting those immigrants.

Trump spent his last day in Florida as he spent most other days — visiting his golf course and tweeting.

On Pakistan, he said: “The United States has foolishly given Pakistan more than 33 billion dollars in aid over the last 15 years, and they have given us nothing but lies & deceit, thinking of our leaders as fools. They give safe haven to the terrorists we hunt in Afghanistan, with little help. No more!”

It was not immediately clear why the president decided to comment on Pakistan. The U.S. has long accused Islamabad of allowing militants to operate relatively freely in Pakistan’s border regions to carry out operations in neighboring Afghanistan. In August, the United States said it would hold up \$255 million in military assistance for Pakistan until it cracks down on extremists threatening Afghanistan.

On Iran, Trump kept up his drumbeat in support of widespread anti-government protests there. He tweeted Monday that Iran is “failing at every level” and it is “TIME FOR CHANGE.”



Staff photo by Jade McDowell
Baby Jose Phillip Escobedo, also known as Joey, is pictured with his parents Jose and Jennifer Escobedo at Good Shepherd Medical Center a few hours after Joey was born.

BABY: Healthy boy born

Continued from 1A

water broke on Friday, she didn’t begin going into labor — a phenomenon known as premature rupture of membranes, or PROM. The longer labor is delayed after PROM, the greater the chance of infection for the mother or baby, so Jennifer was induced. She said the hospital staff was very considerate in starting the “least intrusive” medications first and working up, but even after the final dose of pitocin Joey was still being shy.

“For some reason he didn’t want to descend, so we decided to do a C-section,” she said.

During the C-section they discovered the umbilical cord had looped around the baby’s neck, but in the end, after all the drama, he was born healthy. Not knowing what extended family members’ sleep patterns would be like in the early hours of New Year’s Day, they send out text messages with the good

news.

“We figured if they were awake they would call, if not they would see it in the morning,” Jennifer said.

A tired but excited Jennifer was presented Monday afternoon with a teddy bear and a large basket of items for the baby, as well as a professional photo shoot, thanks to his status as the first baby of 2018 born at Good Shepherd. There were a few items in there for her, too, she was told.

“Is it cookies?” she asked jokingly, commenting that she couldn’t wait to eat solid food again.

Jennifer teaches preschool for Head Start in Boardman, and Jose works security in the area. The couple said they were looking forward to bringing home their first child in a couple of days.

“I was not expecting a New Year’s baby. I was expecting a tax break baby.”

— Jennifer Escobedo, mother of Jose ‘Joey’ Phillip Escobedo, Umatilla County’s first baby of 2018

Contact Jade McDowell at jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4536.

101: Looking for way to cover \$320M shortfall

Continued from 1A

R-Medford — launched a referendum drive to repeal the bill. A no vote is a vote to revoke the legislation. Measure 101 critics maintain that most of the \$320 million shortfall could instead come from elsewhere and that it unfairly taxes individuals, small businesses, school districts, college students and non-profits while exempting corporations and unions because of their lobbyist power.

Parrish, whose cell phone number appears in the special election voters’ pamphlet, said the question isn’t whether to fund Medicaid, but how to fund it.

“We didn’t think taxing the health insurance plans of our teachers is a fair way fund Medicaid,” she said. “\$25 million is going to come out of our public schools.”

Parrish also said she believes taxing net revenues of larger hospitals will boost costs for patients.

Patty Wentz, spokeswoman for the Yes for Health Care campaign, sees things differently. For one, she fears losing federal matching funds if Oregon lawmakers can’t figure out a way to pay for Medicaid.

“With Measure 101, we put in \$320 million and it gets matched and expanded to \$1.3 billion,” Wentz said. “Without Measure 101, we could be down \$1.3 billion in our health care budget. People would lose health care. It gives us the most certainty in funding health care — anything else is a gamble.”



Staff photo by E.J. Harris
Ashton Dokka, 13, holds up his asthma inhaler that would cost \$70 without coverage from Medicaid expansion due to the Affordable Care Act.

“An inhaler costs about \$70.”

— Jennifer Dokka, Medicaid expansion recipient who has two sons with asthma

A coalition of 125 organizations supports the measure. The list includes the Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems, the Oregon Medical Association and the Oregon Nurses Association.

“Insurance companies and hospitals not only endorse this package, they helped craft it,” said Dr. Charles Hoffman, a Baker City internist who advocates for passage of the measure.

Harry Geller, CEO of CHI St. Anthony Hospital in Pendleton, is also a backer.

“I wholeheartedly urge people to vote yes on Measure 101,” Geller said. “The hospital community is pretty united to protect health care for everyone in the state.”

Dennis Burke, president and CEO of Good Shepherd

Medical Center in Hermiston, is more guarded. The administrator thinks the state should stand on its own, not assessing hospitals, insurance companies and others for enough state dollars to garner a federal match.

However, “I’m supportive of it because I don’t think we have an alternative,” Burke said. “Our state has found itself in an untenable position. Oregon is the state fourth-most dependent on federal dollars and that’s not an enviable position. We need to work to change that.”

Supporters say that expanded Medicaid means that fewer people use the emergency room for basic health care and hospitals pay less in charity care. St. Anthony nurse Margie Gutierrez, a Measure 101 supporter, says fewer

individuals now use the St. Anthony emergency department for primary care.

“People don’t wait until they’re really sick and then go to the ER,” Gutierrez said. “That’s a really inefficient way to do health care.”

Hoffman worries that if the measure is voted down, exciting gains in health care like that could evaporate. He pulled out a graph that showed that ER visits, hospitalizations and specialist visits among OHP patients decreased as visits to primary providers rose.

“What we’re doing is working,” Hoffman said.

He said the stakes of failing Measure 101 are high.

“A third of Umatilla County — a third of Eastern Oregon — receives this insurance,” Hoffman said. “Of that third, half are children.”

Dokka, the single mom on Medicaid, said she’ll be relieved if Measure 101 passes. If not, she worries about whether state legislators can cobble together financing.

“I’m worried that they don’t have a Plan B,” Dokka said.

“We have a backup plan,” Parrish said, adding that an alternative bill is already drafted. “We believe there’s a way to get there. I have family in the expanded Medicaid program. Do you think I’d cut care to my own family?”

Contact Kathy Aney at kaney@eastoregonian.com or 941-966-0810.



Staff photo by Kathy Aney
A runner and her two dogs usher in the new year by participating in Monday’s Resolution Run at Riverfront Park in Hermiston.

RUN: Pets join in the fun

Continued from 1A

the below-freezing temperatures, and T-shirts printed with the date of the run and “Hermiston: You Can Run Here” were available. The slogan is an echo of the city of Hermiston’s former slogan “You Can Grow Here.”

Some athletes took to the trail with baby strollers, while others brought along their dogs. The first group of runners to return reported being greeted by a very excited stray dog partway through their run, and once they had rehydrated several of them took off for another run together.

Liz Sharon, who ran the trail with her daughter and her

daughter’s friend, said she felt the run went well and was a good way to start the new year.

“It’s a fun community event,” she said. “... I like the new year. I like the new start.”

Nate Rivera said he enjoyed the run and was glad the weather was clear for it, even if it was cold. He said the Resolution Run each year feels like a good way to reset from the over-eating and lazing around that usually happens over the holidays.

“It breaks you out of that holiday rut,” he said.

Contact Jade McDowell at jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4536.