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# Congressional Leaders: The Legislative Outlook in a Political Season

## House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi, Senator Joe Manchin

INTERVIEWER: *Dana Bash*

CNN'S DANA BASH interviewed two key congressional leaders, House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and Senator Joe Manchin (D-WV). Their discussions examined policy and politics in three key areas: the challenges associated with major legislation during an election, the possibilities enabled by the lame-duck session, and the opportunity for reform in a new administration and Congress in 2017.

### House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi

Pelosi discussed her support for “pay as you go” budgeting, which requires that new mandatory spending increases or tax reductions be offset elsewhere by cuts in other mandatory programs or additional revenues. She argued that this requirement helps force consideration of the cost of each policy, asking “If you want to have a tax cut, how do you pay for it? If you want to make an investment, how do you pay for it?”

Ultimately, Pelosi said, the “goal is to meet the needs of the American people, in a way that reduces the deficit, creates growth, creates good-paying jobs. And that’s the test we should put the budget to.”

**Senator Joe Manchin**  
(D-WV) U.S. Senate  
Committee on Armed  
Services and Committee  
on Commerce, Science,  
and Transportation





**Dana Bash**  
*Chief Political Correspondent, CNN*

**House Democratic Leader  
Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)**

Pelosi highlighted rising interest costs as one powerful reason to reduce America's long-term debt: debt service is "like money down the drain because we [aren't] getting anything for it."

Echoing statements made by other Summit panelists, Pelosi identified tax expenditures as ripe for closer scrutiny. "There are over a trillion dollars" of tax expenditures, she said, adding, "some of them are worthy ... [but] half of them are total giveaways. And they increase the deficit, do not create growth, and are just special interest giveaways that have been carved out in the dark of night."

The key to finding a bipartisan solution, she said, is for all parties to "come to the table with shared values and come up with a budget that represents our values."

### **Senator Joe Manchin**

Manchin spoke about his commitment to centrist policymaking in a legislative body that is too often polarized, and is not focused on long-term planning. He noted that his experience as governor of West Virginia shaped his commitment to fiscal responsibility. As governor, he

said, fiscal issues were a constant priority, but "nobody thinks that way" in Washington.

Manchin praised the concept and work of the bipartisan National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform. Manchin said the Commission took the right approach—and perhaps one that should be repeated. He noted that though the Commission did not achieve the required votes to send the package to Congress, it did earn a supermajority of bipartisan support and should be seen as a blueprint going forward. "They were going at it in a way that it needed to be tackled," he said. "They got 11 out of 18 votes. You had five Republicans, six Democrats that voted for [the Commission's recommendations]."

Looking past the election and assessing the nation's fiscal condition, Manchin spoke about opportunities for reform. "In political life," he said, "especially if you're an executive, whether you're the president or the governor or whatever, [there are] two things you better not waste: a mandate and a crisis." He said that the next time the United States has the opportunity, the first priority should be to "get [our] financial house in order."