

REP. PETER T. KING (R-NY) INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT
TAPED: THURSDAY, AUGUST 24, 2017 1 PM ET
EMBARGOED UNTIL: SUNDAY, AUGUST 27, 2017 12 PM ET
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NEIL A. CAROUSSO: 00:00 We're joined with Congressman Peter King. He is the representative for the second district of New York and he's also on the sub-committee, chairs the sub-committee, on counterterrorism and Intelligence in Homeland Security in the House. Congressman King, thanks so much.

REP. PETE KING: Great to be here. Thank you.

CAROUSSO: I appreciate it. Thanks for taking time to talk a lot about policy because it's August recess now; you have an ambitious legislative agenda that the President has put forth. So, what's the plan going into September?

REP. KING: 00:28 Actually, a lot of basics to get done in September. We have to first of all keep the government open because the fiscal year ends September 30th and we have to either adopt a spending plan for next year or we have to keep the government open to 30-day intervals or two-week intervals, which is always a bit like playing Russian roulette. So that's the main thing. We also then... [0:51] I think health care is going to be pushed to the side for a while. As far as the whole tax reform: There's somewhat of a difference in the party. [1:00] I am urging tax cuts rather than tax reform. The reason I say that is: Tax reform, I think, that could be another debate going on forever. There's talk of part of the reform would be to eliminate the property tax deduction, the mortgage interest deduction, the state income tax deduction, and I don't see any way you can get a bill through doing that. I wouldn't vote for it myself.

CAROUSSO: 01:19 Is it because...you wouldn't vote for it... is it because you wouldn't get Democrats on board because you would think tax reform you could get some Democrats.

REP. KING: 01:26 No, they feel that Democrats will not support us. And what they want to do is... they want to do it in this arcane system of reconciliation, which means we can do it with 51 votes in the Senate we don't need Democratic support but to do that you can't make any policy changes you just have to move the numbers around. So, in any event, to make a long story short, the only way

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they feel they can get the numbers to add up is by eliminating a lot of these deductions which are very very helpful to Long Island so that that will be damaging to us. I think we should go through tax cuts. That's what Reagan did in 1981 when across the board tax cuts five years later he did tax reform.

- CAROUSSO: 02:03 So, you think tax cuts is the vehicle to get there because you know President Trump has proposed comprehensive tax reform that would include both corporate and individual. So you would have you know simplifying the tax code first of all – seven brackets to one bracket to three brackets rather, you would have the corporate tax rate reduce that from the highest that is an industrialized world and bring that down to 15 percent plus repatriation. These are all things that would boost the economy. And right now, the market is banking on at the very least tax cuts. Do you think that President Trump will ever get tax reform, because like you said, we haven't had it since 1986 and both parties have been trying to push it through?
- REP. KING: 02:39 I think to get it through, we have to get the party in a stronger position and that's why we need tax cuts. Tax cuts, to me, would be a lot easier to get Democrats on your side. Have tax cuts, bring that corporate tax rate, bring about the repatriation, and also to provide tax cuts of working class middle income people who are the backbone of the country.
- CAROUSSO: 03:00 Now, President Trump has also taken regulations and have slashed them... over 800 regulations. Also, in addition to that, he has an executive order that says any new regulation: Two have to be cut. That has had an impact on the market. Have you seen an impact from your constituents on Long Island?
- REP. KING: 03:20 Mainly from people that work in Manhattan, work on Wall Street, work in the banking sector. I think that's where you see that impact first. But we see that impact there then within a year or two you're going to see more jobs being created. It's going to... I fully support

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what he's doing as far as cutting back on the regulations. They got totally out of control.

- CAROUSSO: 03:39 Right. and you know, 41,000 manufacturing jobs so far have been created there is a lot more work to be done. So do you think if we start with tax cuts you think companies will come back? I think at least you do a repatriation, even if you do it small bills. Wouldn't you think that repatriation you lower the corporate tax rate, you allow them to bring it in for maybe 10 percent tax, and then, you're going to be able to have companies investing in American workers and obviously that's President Trump's philosophy is putting American workers priority, first.
- REP. KING: 04:10 I think repatriation is absolutely essential. It's important to do it and on that, I think again on that we should be able to get a certain amount of bipartisan cooperation.
- CAROUSSO: 04:17 All right, let's move to health care he you said you want to put that off. Why wouldn't you go back? I mean the House passed the American Health Care Act. The Senate, obviously, you fell by one vote short.
- REP. KING: 04:29 Well, it fell by one vote as far as proceeding. There were not enough votes to pass it. I know that I can think of at least three or four senators who would have voted to... not voted for that version of it. All it was going to do is basically repeal it without having any replacement. The problem with it right now is that you had ObamaCare for four or five six years whatever you want to start the opening date. And, so a lot of local governments state governments are dependent on flows of income and income streams from it expansion for instance be one example that can be changed overnight and that's where I think we need a more comprehensive bill. I voted for the bill in the House but I wasn't that crazy about it. And I basically said, I want to change this if it came back to the House, I want some changes made....The Medicaid, especially, you I mean what is a good idea or a bad idea. But, New York state increased Medicaid expansion or adopted the city in 2000 you know new people and so state governments local

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governments sort of based on that. Now, we have to find a way... if we're going to get out of it...ease out of it...you can't end that overnight.

- CAROUSSO: 05:34 It's funny because health care is something that you know every party tries to tackle, both parties, and the Republicans it seems like they are very, in a negative way, they're very diverse; whereas, you know Democrats follow along with each other, Republicans they're...see, to not get on the same page. Everyone has different...some very conservative, some moderate. Do you think you can ever as a party, get together on that issue because you're basically dealing with an entitlement and how do you, how you play with that?
- REP. KING: 06:05 I think we can, if we accept the fact that it's not going to be repealed entirely...that there are parts that are going to have to remain, just reality to get 218 votes, or if we we're going for a you know to go through the Senate to get 51 votes or actually get 60 votes really I guess it would go need to get it through the Senate. We can get to 218 in the House. For instance, we got 218 the last time... we would have got more, I believe, if we had allowed more of the Obamacare language to stay in there for now... does not say that forever, but again you can't change something overnight once it's there.
- CAROUSSO: 06:40 Do you think similar to tax reform, you could do small bills to repeal health care and replace at the same time?
- REP. KING: 06:46 That's something we can look at, yes sure. And again, we were going for all or nothing that was done for different procedural reasons. I think it would make more sense to do it part-by-part.
- CAROUSSO: 06:56 I want to ask you about ObamaCare subsidies because President Trump has threatened terminate the insurance subsidies or what he has said, bailouts. That's not sabotage even though that's been the narrative by the media and Democrats that it would be sabotage. But, the CBO report that said that the "Silver" plans would increase by 20 percent with the Better Health Care plan put through... says that...well Congress never

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appropriated the funds for the subsidies. So, ultimately there is... and Paul Ryan had sued the Obama Administration... found out that these payments are being made without funds for it. About...

REP. KING: 07:30 And that suit is on hold right that even though we wanted to the district court level.

CAROUSSO: 07:34 Right. And, a federal judge said that it's unconstitutional, these payments. Payments are still being made. Nothing has been said about it. Either President Trump halts it or you fund the subsidies. And that would probably decrease premiums, balance the insurance marketplace for now. What are your thoughts on that?

REP. KING: 07:51 I think again, it's not been looked into enough. I understand the reasoning behind withholding the payments but if it is done too quickly, you can risk undermining the markets and causing unintended consequences and that's the danger of doing this without having hearings, without doing it in a more extensive way so we're ready for all the you know all the possible consequences.

CAROUSSO: 08:13 What about ObamaCare taxes because there are a lot of taxes in the bill that actually, if you take those out would be would relieve employers and employees of these taxes?

REP. KING: 08:23 Yeah, again, this is all part of what has to be done. The problem is we try to do almost all and nothing and that's the problem.

CAROUSSO: 08:30 So, we're in September...

REP. KING: 08:31 But, the reason I'm saying... rather than get bogged down... because I don't see any way they're going to get to 51 votes in the Senate or the 50 votes you even have the Vice President cast his vote. So let's go, let's get points on the board, let's get...show results the American people, do tax care... do tax cuts and then also do infrastructure.

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- CAROUSSO: 08:48 Right. And I think the Trump Administration, at this point, is looking for a win, especially that we've got to September with a lot of obstruction from the other side. The debt ceiling is also the next big thing and you had alluded to that. So, the Treasury Secretary wants a 'clean,' you know debt-ceiling bill, nothing attached to it. Interestingly, President Trump tweeted earlier that he would have wanted the VA bill that was just passed into law that he signed the other day. He wanted it to be attached to it. But, regardless do you think this debt ceiling will go smoothly or it's been tough working with both parties.
- REP. KING: 09:21 Yeah I think it should. To me I would vote for a clean debt-ceiling. This is money we owe. And to get bogged down again the longer we get bogged down in that because that's what we're going to pass anyway. That means we can't get to tax cuts. We can't get to infrastructure. I want to get right to tax cuts and right to infrastructure.
- CAROUSSO: 09:38 Right. And you mentioned infrastructure. It was interesting because when I was looking at our infrastructure compared to other countries...China...they've built about 150 airports, a little more than that in the past couple of years. They're in the midst of a major infrastructure development. Our country's airports...you know LaGuardia here in New York is one of the worst dilapidated airports and President Trump brings that up a lot. Where are we with an infrastructure plan? You would think that should unify both parties should be able to get a bipartisan bill.
- REP. KING: 10:10 I don't know where we are. The reason I'm saying... I hear different stories from different people. I think again it's important for the White House... has to get moving, has to be dealing with the House and the Senate. And, because to me, there's so much there, and that has the potential, the real potential for bipartisan agreement. There's so much that can be done. It's not going to be perfect, but there's enough to bring Democrats, I think, into the fold on that once you

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get it through. So, if you combine tax cuts and infrastructure, you're providing funding you're fighting funds for working people for middle income people and you're making progress improvements for the country.

CAROUSSO: 10:44 Now, let me ask you, someone who has passed a lot of bipartisan bills and that's co-sponsored a lot in your term. Where is this debate going to go? Is there going to be true debate between both parties? Because it seems like anything President Trump wants to put forth, and he has a very ambitious agenda, a lot of it is... should be nonpartisan, but it seems like any President Trump is going to do, they're going to oppose even if its infrastructure. Is there going to be debate?

REP. KING: 11:14 The reason that we can make progress in infrastructure is there's enough there for senators who are in states that President Trump carried...Democratic senators. And, so whether it's true love or whether it is survival, I think there are a number of Democrats we can bring on board for tax cuts and infrastructure. It won't be perfect Republicans but we can make it a 70-30 or 75-25 Republican bill on infrastructure and on taxes. I believe it would bring in enough Democrats to get us over the hump.

CAROUSSO: 11:45 So, the border wall is another key Trump promise. Interestingly, that was supported after 9/11 by both parties and part of the wall was built, and President Trump actually visited Yuma, Arizona and visited the border. That's me there. They met a lot of progress. In fact, Homeland Security Secretary Elaine Duke wrote in an op-ed in USA Today, emphasizing that border walls work, that while they're arresting an average of 800 illegal aliens a day, they're unable to stop trucks unless the wall is there. These trucks are smuggling in people, they're smuggling in heroin and drugs are being sold to our kids. The border wall was supported by both parties after 9/11. Now the Democrats say we're not building the wall. President Trump has made this a key campaign promise. What are your thoughts on the wall?

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REP. KING: 12:31 Actually, the bill was passed back in 2006 was my bill. I was then chairman of Homeland Security Committee. I think what was important, and you're right, even Hillary Clinton supported it at the time I'm not sure about President Obama...

CAROUSSO: 12:45 Chuck Schumer did.

REP. KING: 12:46 Schumer did, yeah.

CAROUSSO: 12:47 Obama did, yeah.

REP. KING: 12:48 OK. Right. I know that Schumer and Clinton did. It's just taking on a whole political overtone and somehow it's considered racist to have a border wall even though Democrats voted for it then. I think again that's when a solid majority of the American people will support us on that. And the President has to make that argument. That's why it's important the President to avoid side issues. On the key issues the American people with us on tax cuts that were on the border wall. It's to gut emotional issues and also substantive issues that the American people are with us on.

CAROUSSO: 13:17 And that's why I'm glad we can have discourse because it seems like with all the vile rhetoric that it's going on the country that these things that should be basic national security issues...maybe you know the funding gets debated. The House did pass \$1.6 billion to fund the wall, recently. It goes to the Senate now. You would think that at this point you would have some better you know discourse, and especially, given the events in Charlottesville and then even the Congressional baseball field shooting, we'd think we'd come together as a country and say let's stop the nonsense and let's get on the same page.

REP. KING: 13:48 Unfortunately, those feelings of bipartisanship don't last long. I know Democrats are under tremendous pressure from their left wing – the Bernie Sanders people, resistance people – that any type compromise at all, they seem to look upon it as treason. Listen, to me, if you could with Donald Trump and Chuck Schumer in the

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room with Paul Ryan we can work something out. I think Chuck Schumer is very concerned about the left wing of his party. Paul Ryan may have concerned about the Freedom Caucus and our party. We have to work around that we have to get it done.

CAROUSSO:	14:21	So, one of the reasons why Donald Trump was elected was his campaign promise to quote unquote drain the swamp. What are congressmen and congresswomen's feelings about "drain the swamp." He's talked about term limits. Interestingly, as I was doing research. I found out something new that you actually have term limits on committee and that's why you are not the chairman of the Homeland Security Committee. You're chairman of the sub-committee. So, I found it interesting that if you can have term limits on yourselves, would you impose term limits on all of Congress?
REP. KING:	14:52	No, I'm totally against term limits.
CAROUSSO:	14:54	Okay, why?
REP. KING:	14:54	It takes away the right of the American people who vote for the candidate they want. That's basically it. And, also I don't see that makes it better. A person's doing a good job, why not let him run? If he's doing a good job his constituents, why should they be denied the right to elect him or her to the job?
CAROUSSO:	15:08	Do see special interests get in the way?
REP. KING	15:10	They get in the way anyway. In fact, if someone has to step down... I mean special interests have been there forever and term limits wouldn't solve that. If anything, it may make it more, make it more extreme because then you would find in these races the first time you find more money to be pumped in than ever.
CAROUSSO:	15:27	You met with President Trump recently in Brentwood, Long Island, not far from here, to talk about the MS-13

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gang. I'm going to go into Homeland Security and MS-13 in a second. Now, you said when you were with President Trump that you had frequent conversations with the President, that you have a good relationship. You would say that you're working well with him on Homeland Security issues?

REP. KING: 15:47 Very well. He's been extremely helpful. Both he and Attorney General Sessions and when he was at Homeland Security, General Kelly, secretary...phenomenal. It's night and day between the Obama Administration and the Trump Administration, certainly from the presidential level and the attorney general level. Homeland Security secretary under President Obama was actually pretty good, but the policies were not from the Obama Administration. President Trump wants to empower ICE, he wants to empower Homeland Security. He is going to stand with the police. MS-13... The fact that the President of the United States, with all the issues in the country, could find the time to come to Brentwood, Long Island to personally go beyond the ground and addressing the MS-13 issue shows the intensity, and you've had many many more arrests over the last several months made by in some cases with the local police who are doing a good job but with strong, strong support from the federal government the number of arrests is really going up. And, MS-13 is on the run. Having said that, it's still going to be a long hard fight but they are definitely on the run right now. The President basically is not worried about political correctness and he is an extremely helpful, the Attorney General, he put the word out to the Justice Department. He wants MS-13 to be prosecuted Stronger than ever before.

CAROUSSO: 17:06 Well I don't understand why that's a partisan issue either, because the MS-13 gang they're brutal, they're killers. Just on Long Island last month, 17 MS-13 thugs were indicted in multiple killings. You had bars raided and an individual had illegally re-entered, so came into our country across the border. In the first quarter of 2017, you had 11 killings linked to MS-13, you had 17 year old gang member filmed and narrated a 15 year

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old girl's killing. And the Suffolk County Sheriff Vincent DeMarco said that these new gang members are coming in basically on a conveyor belt and they're coming through, part of the Mexican cartels. So, they're selling drugs or about 8,000-10,000 members in about 42 states, maybe more. And they don't necessarily use guns and they go after other illegal immigrants. President Trump is going after that. How come...well, first of all do you see progress? And second of all, how come there's division on that issue?

REP. KING 18:07 There's real progress being made by the President, by Homeland Security, by the FBI, by Suffolk and Nassau County police. They are making progress. However, we are not getting all the support we need from the community mainly because the so-called leaders of the community basically urged people not to cooperate. They want to portray this as a plot by Donald Trump, by me, by Attorney General Sessions to use the arrest of MS-13 as an excuse to deport immigrants from this country it's horrible to put the fear of these are people who live in low income working conditions. There's crime in those areas and they are being told that this is a plot by the President just to find out who they are and lock them up. It's absolutely terrible.

CAROUSSO: 18:52 Well let me ask you to that point, because I had a conversation, I've done multiple interviews with a retired immigration agent Michael Cutler. You may know him, he testified in front of the 9/11 Commission. And he made it very clear that cooperating illegal aliens are provided with visas by law enforcement if they speak-up about crimes and I've spoken to people who know other illegals that are involved in some activity. And, they said that if they knew that they could speak-up without repercussion they would and I said 'Well that is the law that you can speak-up.' And they're soothed by that, but the narrative is President Trump is evil, Republicans want to deport illegal immigrants. That's not so. How come the messaging hasn't been prevalent on that.

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- REP. KING: 19:33 Well, when the Attorney General was here, he tried to make it clear there was no intention to arrest people who come forward or deport people who come forward... encouraging people to come forward. And I'm not aware of any instance on Long Island where any attempt was made to deport someone who came forth. And even when other illegals are undocumented are arrested, they're not being targeted. If there's six or seven MS-13 people in the house, house is raided and there's also two others there who are undocumented they are going to be brought in. There's no doubt they're here illegally but they are not the ones who are being targeted. It's MS-13 that's being targeted.
- CAROUSSO: 20:07 So Attorney General Sessions has also sought out to defund sanctuary cities and that's caused an uproar. But I look at cities that are have liberal mayors like Chicago – over 400 murders so far, 781 last year. It's total chaos. And, you know, this is a city with strict gun control and you know all he's saying is being a law and order. How come that or I don't know has progress been made on that – is there going to be some working relationship there to get rid of these sanctuary cities that harbor criminals?
- REP. KING: 20:40 There has been progress in Florida it's been turned around to cities and it's just become emotional issues they become political issues that are demagogued [sic]. I mean I don't think 20 years ago people thought we'd be having this debate. I mean Bill Clinton, State of the Union I think in 1996 or in 1995 said that the danger of having too much...any illegal immigration is always there. And now it's reached the stage where you have illegal immigrants coming in and again with MS-13, I think 7 of the last 11 people indicted in MS-13 murders in Long Island where these unaccompanied minors came across the border. So not only were they undocumented they came across, put into a special federal program and still carried out these murders.
- CAROUSSO: 21:22 ICE estimates that about 1.2 million criminal illegal aliens are out on the run and you know we don't know anything about them. So, they're not necessarily on law

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enforcement's radar because we don't any information on them and they just came in across the border. I want to move on quickly and I appreciate you taking time today. The opioid epidemic: What's the latest on that? I know there's a problem in your district and really across the country.

REP. KING: 21:48 We're losing more people to opioids than we lost in the Vietnam War. This is not just a low income, inner-city tragedy. This is affecting middle income, upper income people across the spectrum of society. First of all a lot more has to be done as far as strict law enforcement, but also, to provide more education to make people more aware of what symptoms to look for. Also doctors have to be made clear they can't be over prescribing. I mean so much of the opioid abuses and deaths come from over prescriptions by doctors. Is really going to take an awareness by people with this is that something is happening far away. It's not something in some inner city that they've never been to. This is happening right here on Long Island, right around us, right in neighborhoods where from the outside everything looks perfect. But inside there were people dying or suffering from opioid abuse.

CAROUSSO: 22:46 Well I can tell you an estimated 2 million plus Americans are dependent on opioids and overdose deaths for both prescription and heroin quadrupled since 1999. It's a real tragedy.

REP. KING: 22:56 In addition that, not only do you have the opioid abuse which could lead to suicide or death, it also leads to more crime because people become desperate to get the opioids. In fact, a good friend of mine John Capano – he was an ATF agent who was off duty and he was murdered in a drugstore in Seaford, Long Island. He was going there to pick up a prescription for his father and that person was just out of jail whose opioid abuser that was there attempting a hold up.

CAROUSSO: 23:24 Are any actions being taken to make the American Medical Association and pharmaceutical corporations accountable?

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REP. KING: 23:34 Yeah, Governor Christie just had a commission which released an interim report. More pressure is being put on the medical profession for them to realize the obligation that they have, more pressure is being put on a local school. But again, this is still a work in progress because it's not something that's easily definable. And so, the American people realize how serious...until the American people realize how serious it is, it's going to be hard to effectively address it.

CAROUSSO: 23:57 So, the AMA put this out in January of this year. Patrice A. Harris, a medical doctor and the chair of the AMA Board of Trustees said that to address the substance abuse problem that they have to label them as 'brain disorders, as true medical diseases and not a social and not a social and moral failing.' What are your thoughts on that?

REP. KING: 24:17 First of all, I agree with that. And, I know Governor Christie's commission is recommending that Medicaid money be allowed to be spent for opioid treatments and that would put it into classification where local state governments and hospitals can use Medicaid money.

CAROUSSO 24:37 What about keeping doctors accountable to be more judicious in their prescribing?

REP. KING 24:41 Yeah, a lot of that has to be imposed by you know medical organizations themselves. But again, the pressure from the federal government is very necessary.

CAROUSSO: 24:52 Before I let you go, this is the 'Contract with the American Voter' President Trump put out. People voted for him, they want him to keep his promises. Do you think that these promises will be kept?

REP. KING: 25:02 Yeah I think that will as much as they can be. As I said I don't think we could do a complete repeal of health care under Obama. We can certainly make significant changes. I think on taxes, on foreign policy, on terrorism, on defense spending, on building up the

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military, we're going to see an excellent job with the President. Good to see you. Excellent job by the president.

CAROUSSO: 25:17 Congressman King, thank you.

REP. KING: 25:17 I appreciate it, thank you very much.