



# Van Hollen says Dems could pl on infrastructure

BY ALEXIS SIMENDINGER - 01/05/18 01:04 PM EST

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The Democratic senator tasked with overseeing the party's 2018 campaigns says his party will gauge support for potential infrastructure investments based on a specific GOP plan, expected this month.

During an interview for The Hill's Power Politics podcast, Sen. Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.) said federal efforts to shore up crumbling roads, bridges and other shared infrastructure needs must primarily benefit states rather than private investors and corporate interests.

"Democrats stand ready for a real infrastructure plan, not something that's another giveaway to Wall Street, which is what we're hearing," Van Hollen said.

"If there's an infrastructure plan that's good for the people of the country, that's good for the people in the states where we have senators running for reelection, they're going to support a plan that's good for the people in their state," he added.

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Van Hollen, who chairs the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, said President Trump missed an opening last year for bipartisanship with Democrats by not collaborating on an infrastructure proposal in his first 100 days, as Trump vowed to do during his campaign.

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“It would have been much wiser if President Trump had started this past year, 2017, with a bipartisan infrastructure bill,” Van Hollen said.

The president recently said he believes an infrastructure bill this year will prove easy to enact with Democrats. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) also hailed the idea as ripe for collaboration in a Senate where his party now holds a narrower 51-49 majority. But in the House, conservatives have been cool to a costly infrastructure package and GOP leaders appear to be talking more about reforms to welfare.

Van Hollen said Republicans have not revealed details about what has generally been described as a plan for \$200 billion in federal investment, leveraged with \$800 billion in state, local and private backing.

Democrats have supported direct federal spending for infrastructure needs, while Republicans favor tax incentives and private investment. Last year’s \$1.5 trillion GOP tax overhaul, opposed by Democrats, may have exhausted running room in the budget for new tax credits, and depleted the minority party’s trust that Trump and Republican lawmakers want a deal.

“The problem, as we saw with the tax bill, is that Republicans and the president refuse to compromise,” Van Hollen told The Hill.

“We have to resolve these big issues. I mean as a country, we can’t let these big issues just dangle forever. We’re hoping that we can pull together an agreement in the coming days.”

Power Politics, hosted by The Hill’s Alexis Simendinger, airs Saturday mornings.

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