House GOP Favors Debt Deal; Most GOP Presidential Candidates Oppose It

The vote followed a week of tough talk and whip-cracking in the House Republican caucus. “Get your a** in line,” House Speaker John Boehner demanded at a private meeting of the entire House Republican conference July 27, according to multiple press accounts. “I can’t do this job unless you are behind me.”

But two of the three presidential candidates in the House — Ron Paul of Texas and Michele Bachmann of Minnesota — voted against the eventual Boehner-sponsored bill anyway, and only the little-known Presidential candidate, Thaddeus McCotter of Michigan, voted in favor of it.

In the GOP presidential field, former Utah Governor Jon Huntsman is the only other candidate who openly backed the Boehner-Obama deal, saying “it is a positive step toward cutting our nation’s crippling debt.”

But Representative Paul correctly observed that the bill would actually do the opposite, enhancing ever-increasing debt accumulation into the indefinite future: "We will have a $1.6 trillion deficit after this year alone, meaning those meager cuts will do nothing to solve our unsustainable spending problem. In fact, this bill will never balance the budget. Instead, it will add untold trillions of dollars to our deficit. This also assumes the cuts are real cuts and not the same old Washington smoke and mirrors game of spending less than originally projected so you can claim the difference as a ‘cut.’ "?

"I have never voted to raise the debt ceiling, and I never will," Paul, a 12-term congressman and medical doctor, said in a press statement before the vote. Speaking from experience, Paul stressed that "for decades, politicians have promised future restraint in exchange for hikes in the debt limit. We are always told that we must act immediately to avoid a crisis. But time and time again, politicians reveal themselves to be untrustworthy, and we soon find ourselves in a crisis being led by the same folks who wish only to maintain the status quo."

Paul added:

> The plan also calls for the formation of a deficit commission, which will accomplish nothing outside of providing Congress and the White House with another way to abdicate responsibility. In my many years of public service, there have been commissions on everything from Social Security to energy policy, yet not one solution has been produced out of these commissions.

Likewise, Michele Bachmann released a campaign video before the vote claiming that "I will not vote to increase the debt ceiling.... We have to deal with the economic reality, and I have the will and I have the courage to see this through."

Even the establishment GOP candidate and current poll leader, former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney, came out against the deal. “I personally cannot support this deal,’’ Romney told the *Boston Globe* August 2, though his objections were less about increasing the debt than the automatic cuts in increased spending that would accompany the plan. “As president, my plan would have produced a budget that was cut, capped, and balanced — not one that opens the door to higher taxes and puts defense cuts on the table.’’

Former New Mexico Governor Gary Johnson opposed the deal, explaining in a campaign statement that "only in Washington is such a deal something to be celebrated as an accomplishment." Former Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty also strongly opposed the bill, though former Godfathers Pizza CEO Herman Cain, former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, and former Pennsylvania U.S. Senator Rick Santorum were oddly silent on the Boehner-Obama deal.