



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on July 29, 2011

Boehner Delays Debt-Limit Vote, Lacking Support

He went on to say his bill represents "the best opportunity we have to hold the president's feet to the fire. [Obama] wants a \$2.4 trillion blank check that lets him continue his spending binge through the next election. This is the time to say no."

Specifically, Boehner's bill calls for \$917 billion in cuts in projected increases in government spending over the next ten years, while immediately raising the debt ceiling by \$900 billion. If Boehner's debt-limit bill were to be passed by both houses of Congress and signed into law by the President, and if nothing else is done to stem the tide of out-of-control spending and red ink, it would mean the Congress would have to revisit the issue of once again raising the debt ceiling in just a few months, just as the 2012 elections are heating up.



This is the primary sticking point with the Senate Democrats who wrote a letter to Boehner indicating that they wouldn't pass the House measure. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) said "every Democratic Senator would vote against it," which means that, if Reid is able to get his own bill passed in the Senate, there would have to be a compromise crafted in committee before a final bill could be presented to the President for signing.

To win support for the bill from recalcitrant GOP caucus members, Boehner indicated that he would incorporate a proposal for a balanced budget amendment. Following Boehner's talk, more than a dozen GOP House freshmen told reporters that virtually all of the GOP 87-member freshman class would back Boehner's debt-limit plan. One of those freshmen, James Lankford (R-Okla.), said, "I like tea sweet enough to stand the spoon up in it. This [bill] is not super sweet tea. But it is not unsweetened, either." Freshman Representative Ann Marie Buerkle (R-N.Y.) acknowledged that Boehner's bill was a compromise, but added that "compromise is leadership." Freshman Rep. Steve Chabot (R-Ohio) said, "I think it's the best deal we can get."

And freshman Rep. Sean Duffy, who also supports the [bill](#), asked, "Was this as big as we wanted to go? Heck no. This proposal gives some of us heartburn because it is not big enough [but] we think it's a bill that will stave off a default and also work for the American people."

Walter Jones (R-N.C.) said [he would vote for the measure](#) to make sure that Speaker Boehner "has a seat at the table" for the next round of conferences between the House and the Senate.

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Freshman Rep Diane Black (R-Tenn.) is impressed with Boehner's leadership, saying that the Republican leadership team "listens to the members. [Boehner] is a great leader." Freshman Tim Griffin (R-Ark.) agrees: Boehner "has gone one-on-one, and he has listened. He has been willing to make changes and to be up-front about the numbers."

And Walter Jones (R-N.C.), a longtime Representative who was first elected to Congress in 1994, said [he would vote for the measure](#) to make sure that Speaker Boehner "has a seat at the table" for the next round of conferences between the House and the Senate.

Boehner wasn't successful in recruiting enough votes to his side, however. [Rep. Jeff Flake \(R-Ariz.\)](#) said he wanted to see more savings in the early years, but "This [bill] may be the last train leaving the station. That certainly weighs on people's minds. A lot of us recognize the most meaningful part of an agreement is what you're willing to do immediately." Rep. Joe Walsh (R-Ill.) told CBS's *The Early Show* that "right now, I can't" vote for it, calling Boehner's bill "a step in the right direction," but noting that many of his colleagues were just too obsessed with the August 2 deadline. He said "We've got plenty of revenues in August to service our debts."

Rep. Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah) [is planning to no](#), saying that he wasn't swayed by Boehner's plea to follow his lead in supporting the bill because

I really truly worry that the debt is one of the single greatest threats to the United States of America, that we're talking about a problem that is multitrillion [dollars] in its depth, and I think we ought to be cutting more. I just don't think it goes far enough. I didn't come here to go along to get along. These arguments of "get behind me" aren't persuasive.

Boehner also met significant resistance from the [Club for Growth](#), a fiscally conservative group with substantial influence in the Republican Party. Their press release said, "Compromise in Washington is a noble idea, but only if it leads to solving the problem at hand. This bill does nothing to fix the fiscal crisis. It merely kicks the can down the road." Heritage Action and FreedomWorks also oppose Boehner's plan and are bringing pressure on Representatives to vote no. Said Heritage Action of the Reid and Boehner bills, "Neither plan rises to the level of the substantial fiscal challenges which face our nation."

But Karl Rove's Crossroads GPS, a supporter of the bill, gives "kudos to Speaker Boehner for showing President Obama what leadership is really about."

When asked about the Boehner bill and its potential impact in bringing government spending under control, Arthur Thompson, CEO of The John Birch Society, said that unless the bill forces sharp, significant, and immediate reductions in spending, "it is a farce." Congressman Ron Paul (R-Texas) told Fox News on Thursday morning that "I'm an easy 'no' on this. Both sides are failing to understand that the country is [already] bankrupt [and] there will be a default. The only debate that is going on is how do you default." Boehner's bill is based on cuts in the out years, while the increased spending allowed is immediate. Paul doesn't trust the bill to bring spending under control: "Those cuts aren't real."

The three co-founders of the Senate Tea Party Caucus, Senators Jim DeMint (R-S.C.), Rand Paul (R-Ky.) and Mike Lee (R-Utah), are also opposed to Boehner's bill, along with Senator Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.). These combined forces were just too much for Speaker Boehner to overcome, at least for the moment.

Some say that in the make-believe world of Washington where cuts aren't real but the spending is, the only reality will be when lenders finally grow tired of lending to a deadbeat country that can't pay its bills. That is when reality will set in, and then the current negotiations will be seen for what they are:



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political posturing, compromise on principles, and expediency.

Others see a silver lining. Part of the intransigence by many legislators is due to the pledge many have signed (240 members of the House and 41 members in the Senate) not to raise taxes. Grover Norquist's [Americans for Tax Reform](#) solicited these pledges, which undoubtedly was a major factor in the GOP Congress taking tax increases off the table in their discussions. In a remarkable show of courage (or perhaps self-interest), many members are staying true to their pledges not to raise taxes, and as a result they are helping to bend the conversation to where it should have been all along: What is the proper role of government after all?

Photo of House Speaker John Boehner: AP Images



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