



Paul Ryan Versus the Freedom Caucus

Speaker of the House Paul Ryan is trying to bring to heel the members of the House Freedom Caucus, and it is not going very well.

On February 2, Paul Ryan [sat down with more than 25 members of the Freedom Caucus](#) around a table amply supplied with beer and munchies to try to persuade them to support the 2017 spending plan — which, naturally, will contain lots of new spending increases and oodles of concessions to fire-breathing Democrats, who cannot countenance the cancellation of a single government program or even a lessening of the rate at which spending increases.



According to one caucus member, Ryan told them in effect that if they wanted to pass appropriations bills this year, they had no choice but to agree to the vast menu of new spending increases that the leadership of both houses of Congress agreed to last October in exchange for not shutting down the federal government.

In an interview with the online Huffington Post after the meeting, Congressman Mo Brooks (R-Ala.) [indicated](#) there wasn't "a snowball's chance in hell" that he would go along with Ryan's proposal. "What we're doing," Brooks told Huffpost, "is like getting a squirt bottle and thinking that's going to stop the *Titanic* from sinking. Paul Ryan has two choices. He can either support a financially responsible path that rises to the challenges that America faces, or not."

Brooks and his colleagues in the Freedom Caucus are angry at the agreement last October to raise spending caps by \$30 billion, even as the national debt continues to soar and the annual deficit resumes its upward path, after having been arrested since 2009.

In the two-hour meeting, which Freedom Caucus members characterized as "intense," they urged Ryan to restore spending to pre-sequestration levels of 2013. Ryan, apparently uninterested in cutting spending, preferred to lay all the blame for the budget mess on President Obama — a dodge typical of pusillanimous establishment Republicans unwilling to stand up to aggressive Democrat posturing and mainstream media slander. Many caucus members, by contrast, laid the blame at least partially on their own party.

House Budget Chairman Tom Price (R-Ga.) told Huffpost that he was optimistic that Congress would — for the first time in years — manage to pass a budget. But when asked whether Republicans — meaning party leaders — would push for meaningful budget cuts for 2017, he replied cryptically that the House GOP was "working through that" and that budgets "are always a challenge."

Translation: "No."



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