



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on January 2, 2011

## The 112th Congress: Real Substance, or Just Smoke?

Incoming Speaker of the House John Boehner told *ABC News*: “The American people want a smaller, more accountable government — and that starts with respecting the Constitution. That’s why we will read it on the floor next week. It sends the clear message that starting on January 5th, the House of Representatives will be the American people’s outpost in Washington, D.C.”



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Other rules being adopted by the House include requiring a public, up-or-down roll call vote on raising the ceiling of the national debt (which ceiling is likely to be reached in March), taking attendance at committee meetings, offsetting any new spending with cuts in other programs, and making available the full text of any new bills at least 24 hours before they are considered and debated by the House. In addition, the new rules require every new bill to cite precisely which article in the Constitution authorizes the enacting of such legislation.

This is an obvious reference to the [“Contract From America”](#) developed and promoted by Ryan Hecker at his website [ContractFromAmerica.com](#), and supported by establishment types seeking to co-opt the Tea Party movement such as Newt Gingrich and Dick Armey. Hecker did some online polling and received over 1,000 ideas for his contract, which he reduced to the “top ten” based upon popularity. The number one principle is “Protect the Constitution: Require each bill to identify the specific provision of the Constitution that gives Congress the power to do what the bill [would do].” Other principles from his contract include

- Reject Cap and Trade

- Demand a Balanced Budget

- Enact Fundamental Tax Reform

- Restore Fiscal Responsibility and Constitutionally Limited Government in Washington

- End Runaway Government Spending, and

- Defund, Repeal and Replace Government-run Health Care

Gingrich waxed predictably enthusiastic about the Contract, as it was inspired by his own 1994



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*Contract for America* which he successfully promoted and then torpedoed during his first term as Speaker:

These are principles and ideas every candidate for office should make part of their campaign. They are even more powerful because they are generated from the people.

In September, House Republicans announced their own plan: *A Pledge to America*, which included similar offerings:

- Extend permanently all the Bush tax cuts
- Cancel all unspent stimulus money, and
- Repeal Obamacare and replace it with a "Republican version"

Missing from either the "Contract" or the "Pledge" was anything substantial: Nothing was mentioned about several 800-pound gorillas in the living room: Social Security, Medicare, the Federal Reserve, undeclared wars, elimination of federal bureaucracies such as the Departments of Education, Energy, the EPA, or even the US Postal Service, or foreign aid.

All of which sounds eerily familiar. In the 1994 "repudiation" of the Clinton administration, neutralizing the "*Contract From America*" started almost immediately, [as noted by](#) the brilliant and insightful economist Murray Rothbard. Calling the 1994 rout by Republicans the "glorious election of November 1994," he said,

The election was not a repudiation of "incumbents"...it was a massive and unprecedented public repudiation of President Clinton, his person, his personnel, his ideologies and programs, and all of his works, plus a repudiation of Clinton's Democrat Party, and, most fundamentally, a rejection of the designs, current and proposed, of the Leviathan he heads.

He tempered his enthusiasm with a careful look at history, noting that while that election illustrated the public's "vigorous and enthusiastic" affirmation of its desire to limit government and expand individual liberty, that "Rolling back statism is not going to be easy."

No ruling elite in history has ever voluntarily surrendered its power, or, more correctly, that a ruling elite has only been toppled when large sectors of that elite, for whatever reasons, have given up and decided that the system should be abandoned.

And so it was, then, of the Republican Party, which was all dressed up in conservative rhetoric in order to deceive the voters into thinking they were getting real change. Rothbard's commentary came less than a month after the November 1994 election, and already he noted endeavors to deflect, minimize and neutralize any real attempts to disturb the status quo. He accurately predicted that "the fair rhetoric of freedom and small government will be used, to powerfully and potentially disastrous effect, as a cover for cementing big government in place, and even for advancing us in the direction of collectivism."

This systematic betrayal was the precise meaning and function of the Reagan administration. So effective was Ronald Reagan as a rhetorician, though not a practitioner of freedom and small government, that, to this day, most conservatives have still not cottoned on to the scam of the Reagan administration....

For the "Reagan Revolution" was precisely a taking of the revolutionary, free-market and small government spirit of the 1970s and the other anti-government vote of 1980, and turning it into its



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opposite, without the public or even the activists of that revolution realizing what was going on.

Echoing the proclamation of Professor Carroll Quigley in his book, "The Anglo-American Establishment," Rothbard reminded his readers that "maintaining [the myth of] two parties means...that the public, growing weary of the evils of Democrat rule, can turn to out-of-power Republicans."

And then, when they weary of the Republican alternative, they can turn once again to the eager Democrats waiting in the wings. And so the ruling elites maintain [their] shell game.

In asking "has anything changed since 1994?" one must remember the enormous advantages now enjoyed by Americanists: the growth of the Internet as an increasingly effective balance to the elites' control of the major communications media, the development of photography-enabled cell phones and the nearly-miraculous YouTube presence which increasingly allows monitoring and instantaneous exposure of government criminality and thuggery, and the concurrent explosion of "alternative-media" websites to explore and expose the elite's machinations in their quest to maintain and expand the state.

Rothbard's own offering of Americanist "pledges" for the new Congress provides a useful standard against which to measure the current weak, diluted, and off-center offerings by those trying to placate and emasculate Tea Party constitutionalists. Here are his "critical tests" of whether those enacting new rules for a new day of freedom in America are legitimate, or just more smokescreens behind which no real change is likely to take place:

*Taxes* Are tax rates, especially income taxes, substantially reduced (and, as soon as possible, abolished)?

*Government spending*: Cuts in defense, cuts in Social Security, cuts in Medicare, and all the rest...it would be simplest and most effective to pass, say, an immediate, mandated 30% federal spending cut, to take effect in the first year.

*Deregulation*: Deregulation of business and of individuals should be massive and immediate.

*Privatization*: A serious move...to privatize government operations. [Selling off] federal public lands is...an excellent example.

*Cutting the bureaucracy*: There must be massive reductions, including abolition of entire useless and counter-productive government agencies [such as] the Department of Energy, Education, HUD, Health and Human Services, and Commerce. And that means abolishing their functions as well.

*Ending counterfeit money*: We must return to a gold-coin standard for the dollar and [abolish] the Federal Reserve System.

In the starkest contrast, then, one can see that the new rules announced by the House, at present, amount to mere distractions from the real issues at hand. Will such rules be the start of serious restoration of freedom, or just more smoke? Jenny Beth Martin, National Coordinator for the [Tea Party Patriots](#), said,

The true test will be whether this really has substance to it and isn't just guile and show. We want to see that they really are paying attention to what is in the Constitution and not just trying to make voters go away and stop paying attention to them.

Martin said that "if this batch of Congressmen and women doesn't step up, the Tea Party will find more challengers to incumbents in the 2012 election cycle."



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