



What to Expect From the New Congress

The election results were not even finished being tallied by the time the left-wing, establishment media began telling constitutionalist Republicans that the path to electoral success was to sell out their principles before the next election, call themselves “moderates,” and adopt every aspect of the far-left Democratic political agenda. Though Mitt Romney had no discernible difference on principles from Barack Obama and his national healthcare program, that didn’t stop the *Washington Post’s* Richard Cohen from sermonizing on election night about how the Republican Party lost because Romney “pandered” by “appealing to evangelicals and other cultural conservatives.” The only way the GOP can avoid another defeat in a presidential race, Cohen counseled, is to knuckle under: “About \$2 billion was spent on the 2012 race, more than half of it, certainly, on Romney. The GOP would do itself — and the nation — a favor if the fat cats who put up this money started backing moderates and rebuilding the party.”



Cohen’s remarks fit perfectly with the mainstream media complaints about continuing partisanship in Washington that can be saved by Republican “moderates” who enact the big government agenda by “working together.” But the old-time, bipartisan cooperation and an end to partisanship is not in the cards for the upcoming Congress, any more than “moderation” is the electoral victory path for Republicans.

“Moderates” Swept From Office

Cohen claimed being more liberal is the path to electoral victory for Republicans, but the November congressional election results actually provided evidence to the contrary. Of the 13 House Republican incumbents ousted in the November vote, their average rating in *The New American’s* [Freedom Index](#) was less than 65 percent, significantly more liberal than the average House Republican. And the only incumbent Republican Senator who lost in November was Massachusetts’ Scott Brown, whose anemic 28 percent Freedom Index score was by far the most liberal of any Republican Senator. Republicans also lost some “moderates” in the primaries, including Republican Senator Richard Lugar of Indiana (Freedom Index score: 58 percent) who lost to Tea Party favorite Richard Mourdock (who lost in the general election), and to retirement, such as Maine’s Olympia Snowe (Freedom Index score: 56 percent).



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One would think that if the Republican Party were too conservative for general election voters, the most conservative candidates would bite the electoral dust first. Yet in case after case, voters often favored Republican candidates who were more ideologically constitutionalist — or Democrats who were even more stridently leftist.

Massachusetts State Senator Bob Hedlund is one of the few Republicans with a history of winning elections in the bluest of blue states, and a member of the local Republican Liberty Caucus. He once explained the phenomenon this way: “When voters are given a choice between a Democrat and a Republican who presents himself as a cheap imitation, they will usually go for the real thing.”

The idea of voters choosing candidates who stand on principle rather than flip-flopping, ambitious office-seekers has also played out on the political Left. As Massachusetts rejected the Senate’s most liberal Republican “moderate,” it embraced what may become the Senate’s most strident leftist in Harvard Professor Elizabeth Warren. Meanwhile, “moderate” Democrats have become nearly extinct. “The Blue Dog Coalition has shrunk with every recent election,” Bloomberg.com reported two days after the election, “and Nov. 6 was no different, with the defeat of Democrats Leonard Boswell of Iowa, Ben Chandler of Kentucky and Larry Kissell of North Carolina. The group will have at least 14 members next year, compared with 24 now.”

While Republican Party flunkies were disheartened by the election results, many constitutionalists cheered. The new Republicans headed toward Washington are generally more constitutionalist-leaning than the crop they are replacing. Libertarian-leaning Republican Congressman Ron Paul lost his bid for the Republican presidential nomination this year in no small measure because of party leadership and establishment media machinations, but a number of his acolytes ran for Congress as Republicans and won on November 6. In making endorsements for the U.S. House of Representatives, the former obstetrician played the role of kingmaker, winning an astonishing eight of 11 House endorsements:

1. Justin Amash, a Michigan freshman congressman (Third District) with a Freedom Index score of 92 percent, was reelected 58-39 percent over Democratic nominee Steve Pestka, even though Pestka poured more than \$1 million of his own money into the campaign. Amash aligned most closely to Rep. Paul’s libertarian ideals over the past two years, and the 32-year-old congressman may hold the mantle as the titular head of the Ron Paul movement in the House.
2. MIT-trained scientist Thomas Massie easily won Kentucky’s Fourth Congressional District race 62-35 percent, and had strong support from Kentucky’s Senator Rand Paul after emerging from the GOP primary where he fought off several establishment favorites. Massie won the open seat primary with major support from the Liberty For All Super Pac.
3. Retired high-school teacher and reindeer farmer Kerry Bentivolio won 51-44 percent in Michigan’s 11th Congressional District race, after some major primary intervention from Ron Paul-backed Super Pacs, including Liberty For All Super Pac. Bentivolio had already won the election to finish off the term of Rep. Thaddeus McCotter, who resigned earlier this year, so Bentivolio, with additional seniority, will have an edge over incoming freshmen toward placement in committees.
4. Former Congressman Steve Stockman will return to Congress to represent the new Texas 36th Congressional District, after easily besting Democratic nominee Max Martin by a 71-26 percent margin. Stockman earned a 77 percent score on *The New American’s* “Conservative Index” (a predecessor of the Freedom Index) during his congressional term (1995-97), among the five highest. This is noteworthy because at the time the GOP was being bullied toward the political Left by Republican Speaker Newt



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Gingrich. Stockman was best known as a congressman for being a strong advocate of the Second Amendment.

5. Businessman Randy Weber won the race to replace Ron Paul in Texas' 14th Congressional District, defeating Democratic nominee Nick Lampson 53-45 percent.

6. Veterinarian Ted Yoho will represent Florida's Third Congressional District after defeating the Democratic nominee, Jacques Gaillot, in the general election by 65-32 percent. Yoho defeated longtime incumbent Republican Congressman Cliff Stearns (Freedom Index score: 80 percent) in the GOP primary this past summer.

7. Congressman David Schweikert of Arizona's Sixth District (Freedom Index score: 85 percent) won reelection 62-33 percent. Schweikert served on the House Money and Banking Subcommittee with Rep. Paul, where he became a key ally in seeking an audit of the Federal Reserve. Schweikert had to survive a redistricting primary challenge against fellow incumbent Ben Quayle (Freedom Index score: 77 percent) before moving on to win the general election.

8. Congressman Walter Jones (Freedom Index score: 97 percent) easily won reelection to North Carolina's third district, 63-37 percent over his Democratic opponent. Rep. Jones had become a key ally with Paul in opposition to the Iraq War and in favor of defending civil liberties in the so-called war on terror. Look for Jones to continue his leadership against wars and for civil liberties.

Some Ron Paul-endorsed candidates did lose their U.S. House elections, however. Longtime incumbent Congressman Roscoe Bartlett of Maryland's Sixth District (Freedom Index score: 74 percent) lost 59-38 percent, a victim of redistricting. Freshman Congressman Joe Walsh of Illinois' Eighth District (Freedom Index score: 84 percent) lost 55-45 percent to disabled veteran Tammy Duckworth, in a race that garnered some national attention. And scientist Dr. Art Robinson — publisher of the free-market *Access to Energy* newsletter — lost an expensive race in Oregon's Fourth Congressional District, 59-39 percent, to replace longtime incumbent Peter DeFazio in a district that leans Democratic.

The House of Representatives in the 112th Congress, in service until January 2013, has 242 Republicans and 193 Democrats (and one open seat), while the new House of Representatives will have a similar make-up: 234 Republicans and 199 Democrats (two races are still undecided). The Democrats picked up nearly 10 seats, but these were mostly by turning out Northeastern liberal Republicans who voted with liberal Democrats on key issues most of the time anyway. In the U.S. Senate, Democrats picked up two seats, increasing their lead to 55-45 if the two Independents elected caucus with Democrats (as expected).

In sum, the voters retained the Republican majority in the U.S. House of Representatives and also chose to keep the Democrats in charge of both the White House and U.S. Senate, while at the same time choosing more polarizing members for both Houses of Congress. Constitutionalsists should be cheered by this split in power among the parties, as federal government spending in recent decades has grown slowest — and even occasionally shrunk — when there has been a Democratic president and a Republican House.

The Constitution

The powers given to the House of Representatives by the U.S. Constitution put the new Republican House in the driver's seat on fiscal issues. The U.S. Constitution requires House approval before even a penny of federal funds can be spent. This means that the House alone has the absolute and unquestioned power to ensure a balanced budget by throttling new spending, even if the Senate and



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president are united in the cause of higher federal spending. Ironically, even most congressmen act as if they are unaware that all federal spending must be approved by the House of Representatives.

Of course, an end to deficits remains unlikely because Republicans have controlled the House for two years and have yet to insist upon a balanced budget through spending cuts. To the contrary, House Republicans approved spending for fiscal 2012 and 2013 that will result in deficits in the \$1 trillion range, even as they blamed Obama for the reckless spending.

Washington “Compromise” vs. Constitutional Compromise

And House Republican leadership appears to be sticking to the same game plan. House Speaker and Republican leader John Boehner started the trillion-dollar deficit sell-out meme on November 7, telling ABC News, “The American people have spoken. They have reelected President Obama and they have again reelected a Republican majority in the House of Representatives. If there is a mandate in yesterday’s results, it is a mandate for us to find a way to work together in the solutions to the challenges we all face as a nation.”

Compromise and bipartisanship has a bad reputation on the political Right, often meaning something akin to “sell-out” when it concerns government spending. And that’s how it’s worked out in recent decades. But the right type of compromise — the method of compromise put into the U.S. Constitution — would put the United States back on a sustainable fiscal path.

The way a constitutional compromise works is that the House of Representatives makes all the cuts it thinks appropriate to annual spending bills, and then sends its spending bills up to the Senate. The Senate cuts further from the House bill, and then sends the reduced bill back to the House. The “compromise” is that both houses of Congress lower spending by only passing spending that both sides agree is necessary.

But the way Washington has worked in recent decades has been the opposite: The House adds trinkets on to its spending bills as bribes for senators to pass House members’ pet projects that senators would otherwise think are unnecessary, and the Senate adds its bribes to House members in exchange for the Senate’s pet spending projects or spending levels. In other words, modern “compromise” in Washington means that both houses of Congress pass spending bills larger than they think wise in order to protect their pet spending projects. In order to balance the budget and bring spending under control, that method of “compromise” has to be replaced with the constitutional method.

It won’t happen overnight.

The “Fiscal Cliff”

While there’s nothing the Senate or president could do to prevent a determined “no” from the Republican House insisting upon balancing the budget through spending cuts, there’s bound to be titanic establishment media pressure on House Republicans to “compromise” principles and keep passing trillion-dollar deficits.

Obama and the leftist Democrats also have an advantage in current tax law that will (but shouldn’t) make the GOP more likely to sell out their Tea Party grass roots. The “fiscal cliff” amounts to an end to the Bush-era income-tax cuts, an end to the Obama-era payroll (Social Security) tax cut, and some small spending cuts (\$1.2 trillion over 10 years, or \$120 billion per year). It would also cut the deficit by two-thirds over the next four years. House Speaker John Boehner gave tribute to the Tea Party influence in the GOP caucus in an interview with Diane Sawyer on the day after the election, noting, “We don’t have



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a Tea Party caucus to speak of in the House. All of us who were elected in 2010 were supported by the Tea Party. These are ordinary Americans who've taken a more active role in their government. They want solutions, but we've all come a long way over the last two years." However, Boehner has whipped up fears of the fiscal cliff's tax increases and defense spending cuts, and seems determined to compromise the Washington way, instead of the constitutional way.

Boehner also said in that November 7 interview that he was determined not to let the so-called fiscal cliff allow tax increases: "The independent accounting firm Ernst & Young says going over part of the fiscal cliff and raising taxes on the top two rates would cost our economy more than 700,000 jobs."

The GOP on Capitol Hill needs to be reminded that all government spending is basically taxation, either as 1. income tax or other taxes, 2. debt, or 3. inflation. Taxpayers pay for government spending on April 15, as higher prices at the grocery store and gas pump, or as a bill handed on to their grandchildren. And of those three means of paying for spending, regular taxation is the least evil and least disruptive to the economy. Nations with high inflation and high national debt grow far more slowly than nations with low debt and low inflation.

But in order to push for lowered spending and an end to deficits, Republicans will have to exorcise the deficit legacy of the Bush White House from the Republican Party. In a Bush-era Cabinet meeting on deficit spending Bush's Vice President Dick Cheney once quipped, "Reagan proved deficits don't matter." And with many Republicans having taken a pledge not to raise taxes, and with the tendency of "moderates" to oppose new taxes while approving higher spending levels, the result has been a federal government with trillion-dollar annual deficits.

In order to solve the fiscal crisis, the new Congress will have to form a broader view on fiscal discipline than the "no tax increases" pledge many have taken at the urging of Grover Norquist's Americans for Tax Reform. Opposition to taxes must also include opposition to debt and inflation as a means of financing runaway federal spending. And the ascendancy of the Ron Paul movement — its eight members is almost a caucus capable of swinging a House vote away from the GOP leadership and toward the Democrats on military spending — should cheer constitutionalists on fiscal as well as foreign policy issues. Part of the reason for the massive deficits is the massive increase in military spending since 2011, so cuts from military spending must be part of any plan to reduce the deficit.

The Road Ahead

Republican consultant Alex Castellanos explained the GOP defeat in the race for the White House this way on election night: "There are some things that Republicans need to fix. We're against big government, unless all of a sudden big government agrees with us or we're running it, especially on social issues. Freedom nationally, values locally, get government out of our lives. I think, you know, we saw a lot of excitement from Ron Paul coming into the Republican Party. We saw a lot of youth there. That's the future of the party, I think. We can't cheat and cut across the track and hug big government when it agrees with us."

Castellanos made that remark without even being aware of the congressional elections results and the success of Ron Paul's candidates. "The party's losses are not necessarily our losses," Dave Nalle similarly wrote for the Republican Liberty Caucus website November 9, adding that "the balance of power shifted and liberty candidates gained seats while the party was losing them."

Nalle noted that the future prospects for constitutionalist-minded candidates has never been brighter, as more "Ron Paul Republicans" may be headed for Congress in two years: "Perhaps most significantly



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hundreds of our endorsees won or held onto seats in state government, giving us a very deep bench to run for higher office going into the 2014 election. Many other great candidates ran strong campaigns and came awfully close to winning, but the weakness of the national campaign and lack of support from state and national party organizations were challenges they couldn't overcome. With more independent funding and resources we expect them to do much better in 2014."

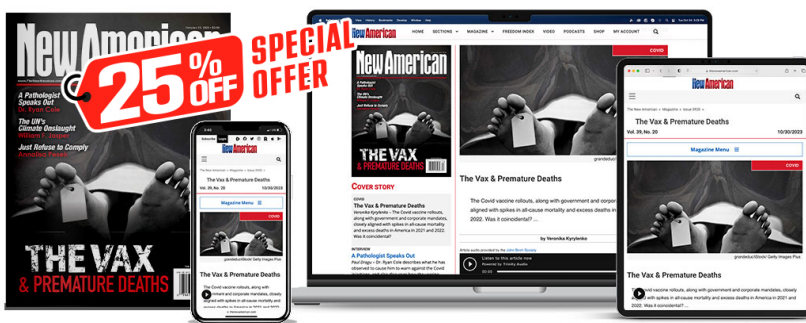


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