



Written by [Daniel Sayani](#) on February 21, 2011

## House Republicans Tackle the UN

One of the most notable developments since Republicans assumed control of the House of Representatives in January is the shift in congressional attitudes toward the United Nations. While not yet considering or proposing legislation that would effectively end U.S. membership in the internationalist body, House Foreign Affairs Committee Chair Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla., photo, left) has proposed a number of bills that would end American taxpayer funding for several United Nations agencies and departments.



Options for House Republicans include seeking a refund of unused U.S. contributions to U.N. peacekeeping activities, demanding return of U.S. overpayments into a fund that reimburses U.S. employees for taxes paid on their U.N. salaries, or prohibiting the government from giving economic aid to countries that hold large amounts of U.S. debt.

House Republicans most recently introduced legislation that would secure the return of \$179 million that was overpaid into a United Nations tax fund; the bill calls upon the Obama administration to ask for the money back, according to [CNS News](#):

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Until the administration certifies that the full sum has been returned, the bill requires that the U.S. withhold an equivalent amount from its contribution to the regular U.N. budget.

The surplus amount had been paid by the U.S. over several years into the U.N.'s Tax Equalization Fund (TEF), which reimburses those U.N. staff members who have to pay national income tax on their U.N. earnings.

The reimbursement aims to create pay parity between employees from the U.S. and other countries that levy taxes on income from international organizations, and the majority which do not.

The U.S. in turn contributes to the TEF, but as of the end of 2009 the fund was holding \$179,010,326 in overpaid U.S. funds. A U.N. financial report released last July confirmed that the money was "payable to the United States of America pending instructions as to its disposition."

This is the money that Ros-Lehtinen and her colleagues seek to have returned by the U.N. as a one-time savings.

Cutting United Nations funding is an attractive and necessary step that House Republicans believe will not only reduce the national deficit, which hovers around \$14 trillion, but will also work toward the reclamation of American sovereignty. The decision is also politically advantageous and strategic for House Republicans, as most Americans are personally opposed to sustained funding of U.N. activities and object to the continual erosion of national sovereignty provided through their own taxpayer funds going toward an agency hostile to American interests.



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The legislation also provides for the elimination of Homeland Security funds earmarked for United Nations headquarters located on First Avenue and East 42nd Street in New York City's Manhattan borough. Ros-Lehtinen argues that American taxpayer funds should not be used to provide security for an alien, internationalist organizational entity which does not submit itself to the laws of the nation, state, and city in which it has planted its headquarters (for instance, in violation of NYC law, smoking is permitted throughout the UN headquarters complex).

The \$179 million owed to the United States was initially set aside for Homeland Security funds to be used for U.N. headquarters by the Obama administration, rather than being returned to congressional hands — an unconstitutional decision which President Obama made in violation of Article I, Section 7, Clause I of the Constitution (also known as the Origination Clause), which states that the Congress, in maintaining the “power of the purse,” must be the original domain of any revenue proposals (“All Bills for raising Revenue shall originate in the House of Representatives; but the Senate may propose or concur with Amendments as on other Bills.”) This unconstitutional appropriation of funds was accurately described by Ros-Lehtinen as a “\$100 million gift card” given to the U.N. in violation of the declared will of the American people, and [in a statement](#), she accurately linked Obama's pro-U.N. policies to the overall unconstitutional nature of other spending programs pushed through by his administration:

It amazes me how easily some in Washington can come up with excuse after excuse after excuse to keep on spending.

Today, the excuse for opposing a bill that would have refunded to the American people \$179 million overpaid into a controversial UN fund was “sorry, we already let the UN spend most of that.” In other words, instead of receiving a refund, the American people are now being forced to give the United Nations a \$100 million dollar gift card.

Congress and the American people were kept in the dark about what was happening with the extra money paid into this account. Now that people are rightly outraged that the surplus has been diverted, the Administration is arguing that the money was needed for immediate security upgrades for the UN. Where does it end? The UN owes U.S. taxpayers millions in overpayments for UN peacekeeping. Will that also be used up to bailout the UN?

If the Administration is willing to let the UN keep money that we accidentally overpaid, how can we expect them to ever get behind the serious spending cuts that the American people are demanding?

The Republican-led initiative to reclaim funds from the United Nations Tax Equalization Fund is one that is most democratic and populist; the idea for the proposal arose partially from recommendations posted by taxpayers on the website YouCut, which was formed at the urging of House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R-Va.) after Republicans won a majority in the House last November. The website, which invites proposals from the public, is designed to give the American people a say in how government spending ought to be reduced. YouCut visitors recommended that funding for the United Nations be cut (as well as funding for such unconstitutional programs as National Public Radio and the National Science Foundation). Rep. Cantor said the [following](#) about the proposal and its genesis in the YouCut initiative:

It appears that the U.N. is still holding the U.S. funds because the Administration has not instructed the U.N. on how it wishes to dispose of them. By instructing the U.N. to return those



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funds to the U.S. we can generate savings for American taxpayers.

Rep. Ros-Lehtinen also expressed similar [sentiments](#) on the gross dissatisfaction of American taxpayers toward the United Nations:

This is not about the UN finally doing the right thing and paying for security upgrades at its headquarters in New York. The UN is not paying for anything. After years of avoiding its responsibilities, the UN, with the support of the Obama Administration, is asking the American taxpayer to bail them out once again and pay 100% of the proposed construction costs. To make matters worse, allowing the UN to take \$100 million of the refund owed to U.S. taxpayers would be an increase for the UN budget. This YouCut not only ensures that U.S. taxpayers receive the funds owed to the U.S. Treasury, but it prevents a \$100 million increase for the UN.

The UN doesn't want the American people to know this so the UN and the State Department are now stating that they should allow this increase because it is for security upgrades. This is not about security. This is the UN and the Obama Administration looking for another excuse to avoid making the difficult choices and requiring accountability from the U.N.

Polls and analyses of public opinion consistently indicate that Americans have a low opinion of the United Nations and are unsatisfied with its performance, believing it to be a failure in many of its endeavors, especially its peacekeeping operations, the domain from which the House is seeking the return of unspent taxpayer funds. The Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) reports the [following](#) about American public opinion on the United Nations:

Fox News in March 2005 asked respondents whether they "approve or disapprove of the job the United Nations is doing?" Just 32% approved, while 46% disapproved and a remarkably large 22% said they did not know. Asked twice in 2005 by NBC News/Wall Street Journal, how much confidence they have in the UN, in May 65% said they had not very much confidence (44%) or not confidence at all (21%), while in September 67% expressed took these positions (not very much 47%, no confidence 20%). Public Agenda found in June 2005 that 64% worried a lot (27%) or somewhat (37%) that "The UN may be ineffective."

The legislation, H.R. 519 (the United Nations Tax Equalization Refund Act of 2011), was voted on by the House on February 9, but failed to earn the two-thirds majority needed to pass under the procedural rules in which the bill was presented. There were 259 votes in favor of the legislation, and 169 votes against the bill, falling short of the 290 votes needed for passage. Voting for the bill were 236 Republicans and 23 Democrats, while 167 Democrats and 2 Republicans voted against it.

The two Republicans who voted against the bill were both from New York, freshman Rep. Michael Grimm and Rep. Peter King, the latter a veteran GOP moderate with a long record of supporting labor unions and gun control, as previously reported by *The New American*. King [said](#) that the \$100 million figure to secure the U.N. complex on the east side of Manhattan had been arrived at carefully and in close consultation with NYPD Commissioner Ray Kelly. He also stated that he believes that American taxpayers bear responsibility for funding U.N. security, echoing House Foreign Affairs Committee ranking member [Howard Berman](#) (D-Calif.), who claims that the Congressional Budget Office found the bill would not save any money, and argued that the U.N. needs the money to improve security at its New York headquarters, that these security improvements are an obligation of the host country, and that pulling money out would put the United States in arrears. Berman thus believes that the American taxpayer has an inalienable obligation and indebtedness to the U.N., despite its one-sided and parasitic



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relationship with the United States.

Likewise, Rep. Keith Ellison (D-Minn.) claimed that the legislation is part of an “anti-UN strategy” being pushed through by Republicans. While the legislation is a step in the right direction for those who oppose the U.N. and its especially corrupt Human Rights Council (of which Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen is a prominent critic) and Marxist-influenced General Assembly (currently under the leadership of [Fr. Miguel D’Escoto Brockmann](#), a Roman Catholic Liberation Theology priest and former Foreign Minister of the communist FSLN Sandinista government in Nicaragua), it still falls short of the desired goal of withdrawal from the U.N.

Though the legislation does not go as far as advocating what constitutionalists have long called for — America’s full rejection of the U.N., as embodied in the [American Sovereignty Restoration Act](#), which would nullify America’s commitments to the internationalist body and its various organs — it is nonetheless an important step in the direction of reclaiming American sovereignty.



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