



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on February 22, 2011

GOP Uses Flyswatter to Defend Against Incoming Debt Missile

Even with only modest cuts in the continuing resolution bill offered by the GOP-controlled House of Representatives, it is highly unlikely to see the light of day when the Senate returns from recess, just before the March 4th deadline. Despite strong rhetoric from House Speaker John Boehner who said "When we say we're going to cut spending, read my lips. We are going to cut spending," this reminded one of the identical words ("read my lips") uttered by Republican Presidential candidate George H. W. Bush in 1988, which cost him his chance for re-election in 1992 when he voted for higher taxes the year before. Boehner's words also generated a protest of Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid who accused Boehner of threatening to shut down the entire government unless the House's agenda was accepted.



Some of the weak-kneed votes on various issues included a proposal by Rep. Tim Walberg (R-Mich.) to cut the budget for the National Endowment for the Arts by an infinitesimal \$21 million. That squeaked through in a 217-209 vote. A proposal to cut subsidies to the poor in the amount of \$390 million didn't set well with members of the house who decided to restore \$50 million of it. One vindictive but otherwise inconsequential vote carved out \$15 million from the Presidio Trust, located in former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's district. An effort to cut \$558 million from special education funding was voted down by 249-179. Even a cut of \$447 million from Amtrak was voted down 250-176.

One interesting vote that did pass initially was to defund a \$450 million project to build an engine for the Pentagon's F-35 warplane a weapon that was opposed not only by Defense Secretary Robert Gates and also by President Obama but if it had passed, would have been built near Speaker John Boehner's district in Ohio.

Late last week several other proposals were pending, such as blocking ObamaCare funding, and stopping the FCC from enforcing its net neutrality policy. Rep. Mike Pence wanted an amendment to defund more than 100 Planned Parenthood clinics around the country. But GOP Republicans were only too happy to restore funds for their favorite projects, such as \$298 million for police hiring grants, \$80 million for economic development, and \$510 million to help fire departments train and equip firefighters.

There was one victory, so far: in a 228-203 vote the stalwarts in the House voted against spending \$10 million to build a sewer project in Tijuana, Mexico.



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Resistance to some of these alleged cuts came from unusual places. On the Capitol Steps last Thursday [Arthur and some Muppets](#) showed up along with supporters of continuing funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, including Rep. Ed Markey (D-Mass.), Rep. Paul Tonko ((D-N.Y.), Rep. Bill Owens (D-N.Y.), and Betty McCollum (D-Minn.). According to Markey, cuts to the CPB budget represented an ideological attack on public broadcasting. Rep. Lowery couldnt resist her opportunity to expand on Markeys inanity: How long with it take for some people to learn that people want Congress to focus on creating jobs, not laying off Bert and Ernie. She managed that, it is reported, with a straight face.

Others more serious about the fate of the republic being targeted by an incoming debt missile of gargantuan proportions [included](#) Gov. Mitch Daniels (Indiana) and Gov. Chris Christie (New Jersey). They both recognize that even if the budget cuts of \$61 billion being proposed by the House were ever passed into law (no chance, thanks to the Senate and the current occupant of the White House), they would only represent a rounding error in the grand scheme. With a nearly \$4 trillion budget, a cut of \$61 billion is 1.6 percent of the total, and only 4 percent of the current \$1.5 trillion deficit.

Calling the growing deficits and national debt a red menace, Daniels said at the Conservative Political Action Committee dinner on February 11th, these are debts our nation has amassed for itself over decades of indulgence [and that] federal commitments now in place will bring about the leviathan state [and] the slippage of the United States in to a gray parity with the other nations of the earth.

Christie used blunt language to describe what needed to be done:

My childrens future and your childrens future are more important that political strategy. Youre going to have to raise the retirement age for Social SecurityWe have to reform Medicare because it costs too much and it is going to bankrupt usAnd we have to fix Medicaid because its not only bankrupting the federal government, its bankrupting every state government [as well.]

Christie then commented on what was passing for courage and backbone in Congress in its imaginary attempts to cut the budget. If those representatives for whom he campaigned in the last election dont grow a backbone and start making some serious cuts, the next time theyll see me in their district is with my arms around their primary opponent. Christie remains optimistic that reductions of significant magnitude can be enacted in time:

I dont think [our situation] is fatal. You just have to have the spine to take the lead and if you ask for shared sacrifice and dont let people game the system, voters will respond.

Photo: House Speaker John Boehner of Ohio, House Majority speaks to reporters after having lunch with President Barack Obama at the White House on Feb. 9, 2011: AP Images



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