



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on July 22, 2009

House Committee Chairmen Rebuke Obama

Four Democratic committee and subcommittee chairmen signed a July 21 letter rebuking President Barack Obama for asserting in a “signing statement” that he could ignore the law as passed by Congress.

“During the previous administration,” the four [stated](#), “all of us were critical of the President’s assertion that he could pick and choose which aspects of congressional statutes he was required to enforce. We were therefore chagrined to see you appear to express a similar attitude.”



The House committee chairmen signing the letter were House Appropriations Committee Chairman David Obey, House Financial Services Committee Chairman Barney Frank, House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Chair Nita Lowey, and House Financial Services Subcommittee on International Monetary Policy Chairman Gregory Meeks.

The [Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2009](#) proposed to confer a \$108 billion loan guarantee upon the International Monetary Fund (IMF) under some minor restrictions imposed by Congress. President Obama signed the legislation on June 26, but stated that he felt free to ignore the restrictions imposed by Congress. Obama wrote in a “[signing statement](#)” that the restrictions “would interfere with my constitutional authority to conduct foreign relations by directing the Executive to take certain positions in negotiations or discussions with international organizations and foreign governments, or by requiring consultation with the Congress prior to such negotiations or discussions. I will not treat these provisions as limiting my ability to engage in foreign diplomacy or negotiations.”

Congress quickly reacted with an almost unanimous [429-2 vote](#) on July 9 rebuking Obama. (*The New American* had previously covered the July 9 vote [here](#).) But the congressional vote was mainly a vote on principle. The [committee chairmen letter](#) was geared toward the practical side of IMF and other foreign aid giveaways. The committee chairmen noted that they had worked to win votes for the foreign aid and are concerned that congressmen may not vote for foreign aid any more if the Obama administration ignores rules congressmen put on it:

We were surprised to read your signing statement in which you expressed the view that you are constitutionally free to ignore the conditions duly adopted in the legislative process regarding funding for the international financial institutions. As you know, there was a great deal of resistance to this funding during debate on the supplemental bill — as there often is for these entities — and the four of us worked very hard to support the inclusion of funding for the IMF and



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the World Bank.

The chairmen [note](#) that unless “you no longer assert the right to ignore provisions that Congress adds through the normal legislative process for funding for the international financial institutions,” then President Obama would “make it virtually impossible to provide further allocations for these institutions.”



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