



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on March 30, 2011

Tea Party Activists Target GOP House Leaders

Tea Party activists frustrated with Republican leadership in the House of Representatives over compromising and promise breaking are planning a rally outside the Capitol and might even try to challenge GOP leaders in the next primary election if the wild spending keeps up. But even as Tea Party groups apply intense pressure on Congressional leadership to seek deeper budget cuts, top Democrats are urging Speaker John Boehner (pictured, left) to ditch the liberty-minded activists and join a statist Congressional coalition.



The Tea Party, however, is not buying it. And at least one of the nations largest organizations is planning to [stage a rally](#) about the GOP leaderships lack of resolve, set for March 31, on Capitol Hill. It will feature several well-known conservative representatives in Congress including Michele Bachmann, Mike Pence, and Steve King.

“[Republican] Members of Congress have abandoned their service to the people by passing continuing resolutions instead of cutting the \$100 billion they pledged,” [charged](#) Mark Meckler and Jenny Beth Martin, national coordinators for the group Tea Party Patriots. “Is it lack of leadership? Is it a lack of courage? A real budget will spark a national debate on the role of government, and that’s what the American people want.”

Another Tea Party group is even plotting a possible overthrow of the House Speaker. Among the most direct and forceful Tea Party critics of Boehner, Tea Party Nation founder Judson Phillips actually [suggested](#) challenging him in the 2012 primary. In a blog post earlier this month, Phillips [called](#) the Speaker a fool and said he made less sense than actor Charlie Sheen.

“The Tea Party movement sprang up in 2009 as a reaction to insane government spending,” Phillips [wrote](#). “In 2010, the American people spoke, demanding change. Everyone realizes that the level of spending cannot be sustained. John Boehner did not get that message.”

Republicans including Boehner rose to power promising to cut at least \$100 billion from the budget for 2011. In a spending bill approved last month, however, Republicans backed a meager \$62 billion in cuts in a supposed effort to compromise. And polls [show](#) the backtracking was not popular among Tea Party activists.

That broken promise is partly why some of the movements leaders think its time for Boehner to go. “This is the one message the Tea Party needs to be out there pushing,” Phillips [told](#) Fox News late last week. “If you don’t live up to your promise, we’re going to throw you out.”

He also suggested that a federal shutdown to force through cuts might not be such a bad idea. “What is worse: a government shutdown or an economic collapse?” he [wondered](#). “Is it worse to deal with a \$14.3 trillion national debt or a national debt of \$20 or \$25 trillion and the whole thing collapses?”

Boehners spokesman said the Speaker wasnt to blame for the broken promises. In an e-mail to Fox



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News, he [tried](#) to pin the responsibility on Democrats.

“The speaker and every Republican in the House is frustrated by the pace of the debate, but the blame lies squarely with the Democrats who run Washington, D.C.,” the spokesman said. “It’s the Democrats who are insisting on the status quo, and no one should be happy with the status quo.”

Of course, Phillips hardly represents the whole Tea Party. Both the Tea Party Express and the Tea Party Patriots [publicly distanced themselves](#) from his anti-Boehner remarks. But still, its hard to find defenders of the Speaker among conservative grassroots activists. And Phillips comments certainly express the frustration felt by a sizeable segment of the movement.

Even local Tea Party groups in Boehners home district [expressed](#) extreme disappointment with him earlier this month. In a letter to the Speaker, a coalition of 10 local Tea Party and liberty-minded organizations blasted his tepid support for raising the debt ceiling and accused House leadership of plotting to break two key campaign promises.

Raising the debt ceiling is in direct conflict with the platform that you and the Republicans in Congress ran on in November, [read](#) the letter. Raising the debt ceiling is not facing a problem; it is simply putting it off for another day. We are anticipating your leadership in finding solutions to our long-term fiscal challenges.

But while activists complain that Boehner is not conservative enough, top Democrats were providing cover by suggesting that he ditch the Tea Party altogether. It is becoming clear that the path to a bipartisan budget deal may not go through the Tea Party at all, [said](#) Democratic Sen. Charles Schumer of New York in a statement. In order to avert a shutdown, Speaker Boehner should consider leaving the Tea Party behind and instead seek a consensus in the House among moderate Republicans and a group of Democrats.

A spokesman for Boehner [cited](#) by the *Daily Caller* responded to Schumers remarks by criticizing Democrats and their support for sustained spending levels. It is the Democrats who run Washington that have refused to provide any spending plan other than the status quo, and the status quo just isnt acceptable to the American people, the spokesman said.

More recently, Democrat Sen. Barbara Boxer (in language eerily reminiscent of former New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller’s plea to GOP presidential candidate Barry Goldwater in 1964) also [called](#) on the Speaker to dump his conservative base. We are urging Mr. Boehner to abandon the extreme right wing, she [said](#) in a conference call, saying the House should compromise on the size of spending cuts and drop a proposed amendment that would stop taxpayer funding of abortion-provider and pro-abortion lobbying group Planned Parenthood.

Meanwhile, House Majority Leader Eric Cantor is also [under fire](#) from Tea Partiers in his own district. After opposing an amendment to make larger budget cuts beyond the mere \$60 billion, his conservative base in Virginia responded with outrage.

“We are extremely disappointed in Eric Cantor, but not surprised,” [said](#) Mark Lloyd, the chairman of the Virginia Tea Party Patriot Federation. “The will of the American people was pretty clear in November cut, cut, cut spending. Apparently, Eric Cantor’s ‘conversion’ to fiscal restraint was only temporary.”

Other Tea Party activists were also upset with the vote against the amendment, which would have cut a mere 5.5 percent from the non-security discretionary budget. “It’s hard for us to understand why



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there's a vote against any amendment. We want to see a yes vote on all cuts," Susan Lascolette of the Richmond Tea Party [told](#) the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*. "To us, it seems like a no-brainer. Why would you not vote for that?"

The Richmond Tea Party activist stopped short of calling for an ouster of House leadership, saying they were on the right track. However, "we want to poke them and keep them moving," she told the paper.

A spokesperson for the Majority Leader cited by the *Times-Dispatch* defended Cantor and said he was working on changing the culture in D.C. while making significant cuts. There is a lot of work to be done and Republicans will continue to lead the effort to cut government spending, but we will need Democrats to join us so these House-passed measures can become law," the spokesperson said.

Other more moderate Republican legislators are also [under fire](#) from Tea Party groups nationwide, particularly two big-spending GOP Senators up for re-election soon Maines Olympia Snowe and Dick Lugar from Indiana. Numerous high-profile Tea Party organizations have [pledged](#) to target them in the upcoming primaries. And those two senators probably have even more to fear from the activists electoral challenges than even House leadership.



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