



## Boehner 2, Obama 0

But that was then, and this is now. Since Boehner became Speaker of the House, his backbone has stiffened and his voting record has improved.

The toughest index I track is the [Freedom Index](#) of The John Birch Society. The index is published twice a year in the organization's publication, *The New American*, as well as on its website. At the end of the 110th Congress, Boehner rated a barely passing 64; now, he has a robust 89. The American Conservative Union rates him even higher, with a 100 for 2010. The liberal Americans for Democratic Action rates him a zero. These ratings mean Boehner votes "right" almost all of the time. That's hard to complain about.



Have you noticed the members of the media aren't making jokes about "the sob sister" in the House anymore? When Boehner was first elected to the House leadership, there were a lot of sneering references to the fact that he often wore his emotions on his sleeve. Boehner was famous for tearing up in front of the cameras more than you or I (and much of his staff, I'll bet) might have wished.

But, as I said, that was then; this is now. You have to admire how he stood his ground when President Obama's staff members tried to bully their way past him for a speech before a joint session of Congress. Or maybe you don't. A lot of commentators said the leader of the House should have acquiesced to whatever the President wanted.

I don't agree. That's not how Washington works, folks. You're talking about a city where protocol rules everything, from public introductions to seating at dinners to all of the manifestations of power.

For the past two centuries, protocol has dictated that whenever the President wants to address Congress, he requests an invitation from the Speaker of the House. Washington historians have not been able to find a single exception to this rule. Not once in 200 years has a President's staff simply announced when he wanted to address Congress with the expectation that the Speaker of the House (and everyone else on Capitol Hill) would meekly accept his dictate.

To the people who care about such things (and there are a ton of them in Washington), the Obama administration's high-handed, even dictatorial, approach was a startling demonstration of presidential arrogance. Still, most observers expected John Boehner to hide his irritation and accept the administration's fait accompli.

To everyone's amazement (including, I confess, my own), that isn't how it played out. Speaker Boehner informed the White House that the "request" was inconvenient; would they mind very much picking another day? He even suggested the following night.

I can only imagine the furious outcries in the White House that followed his response. The air must have



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been filled with exclamations of “How dare he!” and “Who does he think he is?!” before Obama’s boys realized they really didn’t have much choice in the matter. They may have wished they could just bully their way in, but that’s not how Washington works. Basically, without an invitation from the Speaker of the House, there would be no speech to a joint session of Congress.

So the speech was moved to Thursday night — with all sorts of promises that it would be over before the really important event would take place that night: the start of the professional football season. (No cracks from the peanut gallery about bread and circuses.)

### **What I Wish the President Said**

Although this column will appear the day after the President’s speech, because of deadline requirements I need to finish it before he delivers it. At this point, I can only guess what he will say.

Whatever it is, I’m pretty confident he will not follow the recommendation of a good friend. Wayne Allyn Root says the President could electrify the country, and do more to turn the economy around than any amount of new legislation, with a simple two-word declaration.

What’s the magic phrase Wayne would like to hear the President utter? “I resign.”

It will never happen, of course. And the practical part of me has to ask: Would things really be any better if Joe Biden got to remove the word “Vice” from his title? I don’t think so.

I plan to comment on the President’s speech in depth next week. After all, the most important issue facing the country is the condition of the U.S. economy. Nothing will have a bigger impact in determining the outcome of next year’s elections.

There will be more skirmishes between Republicans and Democrats between now and then, but isn’t it wonderful to realize how the debate has changed?

Remember the despair so many Constitutionalsists felt three years ago? Barack Obama had swept into the White House with promises of “hope” and “change.” The Democrats had solid majorities in both branches of Congress, led by two implacable liberals: Nancy Pelosi in the House and Harry Reid in the Senate.

It looked like the left could get anything it wanted.

How times have changed. While we didn’t win the recent battle over the debt ceiling, we did change the nature of the debate. No longer could the Democrats spend as much as they wanted on anything their redistributionist hearts desired.

The debate was no longer about how much more debt the U.S. would accrue. No, now the debate was about how spending could be brought under control. The President wanted a “clean” debt ceiling increase; that is, one that would allow him to borrow another couple of trillion dollars and “invest” it in public-works projects.

That’s what he wanted, but it’s not what he got.

We didn’t get what we wanted, either. A balanced budget is as far away today as it was at the beginning of the year. But at least we’re talking about getting there.

In conclusion, thanks to the National Tea Party in Washington, D.C. for the headline of this week’s column. I borrowed it from an email I received from it last Saturday.

And let me also thank it and its colleagues across the country for all they have done to bring new



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energy and millions of new troops to these battles. We've seen an amazing transformation in the past few years. While we haven't won the war or even any major victories, I, for one, am more optimistic than I have been in years. Aren't you?

Until next time, keep some powder dry.

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