



Written by [Christian Gomez](#) on May 23, 2016

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A Good Brat?

From the outset, Congressman David Brat of Virginia (shown) has shaken the establishment, and continues to do so with his unswerving commitment to liberty and a constitutionalist voting record. In what was initially seen as a long-shot race against incumbent House Republican Majority Leader Eric Cantor, economics professor David Brat of Randolph-Macon College accused Cantor of having a “crony-capitalist mentality” and defeated him in the Republican primary, going on to win in the general election in 2014. Shortly after the general election, on November 12, 2014, Brat was sworn in to complete Cantor’s term, following Cantor’s resignation.



Now in the second year of his first full term, Brat is seeking reelection to the House of Representatives. Despite being a freshman congressman, Brat has already left his mark as a constitutionalist, garnering a notable 91-percent score from *The New American’s* “Freedom Index,” which measures congressmen’s fidelity to the Constitution by the votes they cast. These votes, some of which shall be examined shortly, highlight why Brat is no disappointment to the voters of the commonwealth’s Seventh Congressional District.

Budget and Fiscal Responsibility

Since Congressman Brat holds a Ph.D. in economics from American University and has been an economics professor, it is apropos that his positions on the budget, national debt, and fiscal responsibility be examined first.

In a key vote, which can be used to separate the foolish from the wise, Brat voted against raising the debt ceiling and increasing spending when the House of Representatives passed the Bipartisan Budget Act (H.R. 1314) on October 29, 2015. This bipartisan budget deal, struck by Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.), Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), then-House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio), and President Barack Obama, “increases appropriated spending by more than \$65 billion, almost all of the \$74 billion that President Obama demanded,” Brat explained.

According to Brat, the budget deal “bails out the insolvent Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) Trust Fund by diverting \$117 billion from the Old Age and Survivors Insurance program, which also has massive unfunded liabilities.” The deal also eliminates the spending caps that Republicans had previously enacted in order to reduce spending.

By passing the bill, Brat said, “we retreat from the one budget victory the party has attained since taking power in the House after the 2010 election.” President Obama called the bipartisan budget deal



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an “actual bipartisan compromise” and House Minority Leader Pelosi glowingly endorsed it, stating, “It’s a compromise and it moves us forward. I’m positive about it.”

With Brat’s opposition to the bipartisan budget deal, he was one of the few House conservatives who did not bow down to the Democrats. On March 17, 2016, in a letter to his congressional colleagues, Brat called upon them to “restore Congress’ power of the purse to hold the executive branch accountable.” And that is exactly what the Virginia congressman has been doing since assuming office.

A month into office, Brat voted against the “CRomnibus” (a combination of a Continuing Resolution and an Omnibus Spending Bill). According to *Congressional Quarterly*, this CRomnibus “would provide \$1.013 trillion in discretionary appropriations in fiscal 2015 for federal departments and agencies covered by the 12 unfinished fiscal 2015 spending bills.” Included in the \$1.013 trillion was:

- \$20.6 billion for Agriculture
- \$61.1 billion for Commerce-Justice-Science
- \$554.2 billion for Defense
- \$34.2 billion for Energy-Water
- \$43.2 billion for Financial Services
- \$30 billion for Interior-Environment
- \$158.2 billion for Labor-HHS-Education
- \$4.3 billion for the Legislative Branch
- \$71.8 billion for Military Construction-VA
- \$52 billion for State-Foreign Operations
- \$53.5 billion for Transportation-HUD

Included in the \$554.2 billion for Defense was \$64 billion for “overseas contingency operations” related to the war in Afghanistan, the fight against ISIS in Iraq and Syria, and other overseas counterterrorism operations.

Furthermore, the omnibus would also fund President Obama’s illegal executive “amnesty order.” Cognizant of this amnesty funding, Brat led the charge to strip the bill of its funding for Obama’s executive action by way of an amendment. On December 11, 2014, in a statement posted on his Facebook page, Brat explained:

This bill funds an illegal act. Above all, this vote was about following the law and the Constitution. I cannot vote to allow an agency of this government to commit an act that the president and the House leadership on both sides have previously agreed is illegal. There are lines that should not be crossed.

Vigorously pushed by the spending hawks on Capitol Hill, this bloated guns-and-butter appropriations bill was both constitutionally and fiscally irresponsible, as it would further add to the nation’s staggering \$18 trillion national debt. Brat’s nay vote was his first major fiscally responsible vote and also marked his first vital stance on constitutional separation of powers, noting the illegality of Obama’s executive action.

A year later, on December 18, 2015, Brat voted against the omnibus bill that would provide



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“discretionary” appropriations in fiscal 2016 to the tune of \$1.15 trillion, a five-percent increase from the previous year’s CRomnibus bill for fiscal 2015. In a press release on the day of the vote, Brat said, “I opposed this massive 2,009 page bill because it spends too much and lacks important provisions demanded by the American people.” He further elaborated, “It spends \$50 billion more in the annual budget than the caps would have allowed before they were raised earlier this year, and it increases the deficit even more with \$57 billion of increased autopilot spending and targeted tax provisions.”

And like the previous year’s CRomnibus for fiscal 2015, the omnibus for fiscal 2016 does nothing to stop President Obama’s continued illegal executive order on amnesty. “It allows President Obama’s executive actions on amnesty. It even authorizes a massive increase in H-2B visas for low-skilled, non-agricultural workers to compete with Americans,” Brat explained. Summarizing what’s wrong with the omnibus, Brat rightly concluded, “This isn’t just cleaning the barn. It’s a disaster. We’re breaking our pledge to the American people on the budget caps, we’ve lost fiscal discipline, and we’re throwing it all on the next generation.”

While the contents of the omnibus may have broken the pledge to the American people by many in Congress to cap the budget, Brat upheld his pledge by voting against it. Uncorrupted by lobbyists, Congressman Brat has maintained his fiscally responsible credentials.

Challenging Crony Capitalism

In addition to his congressional reputation for fiscal restraint, Congressman Brat has challenged the very “crony-capitalist mentality” personified by his predecessor by taking on the Export-Import Bank.

Originally created under President Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal initiative to subsidize U.S. exports during the Great Depression and World War II, the Ex-Im Bank has become the embodiment of corporate crony capitalism.

The Ex-Im Bank receives its funds from the U.S. Treasury from money created out of thin air, which eventually results in increased taxes and inflation. After the Ex-Im Bank gets the funds, it loans them at lower-than-market-value rates with long-term deferred due dates to countries such as Russia, China, and Pakistan, which in turn use those funds to purchase goods from specific U.S. companies, such as Boeing. In fact, the bank is known as the Bank of Boeing because Boeing receives nearly 40 percent of the funds that the Ex-Im Bank discharges so that countries purchase its aircraft.

If the loan’s recipient country becomes delinquent or fails to pay the loan, then the U.S. taxpayer foots the bill entirely. Essentially, as former Congressman Ron Paul (R-Texas) put it in a newsletter he penned in 1980, “The Soviets get the goods. The big banks and companies get the profits. And the taxpayer gets the bill.”

During former Congressman Eric Cantor’s tenure in office, Cantor voted in favor of the Ex-Im Bank in 2001, 2002, and 2012. Fortunately, the new standard-bearer of Virginia’s Seventh Congressional District has prudently seen fit to chart a new course. On October 27, 2015, Brat voted against the Export-Import Bank Reform and Reauthorization Act of 2015 (H.R. 597), which would reauthorize the Ex-Im Bank’s charter through fiscal 2019.

Of the Ex-Im Bank, Brat said in a press release, “As an economist, I support free trade and equal protection under the law, but I oppose special privileges and Washington picking winners and losers in the economy. Just as then-Senator Barack Obama said in 2008, the Export-Import Bank is little more



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than a fund for corporate welfare.”

Regarding the vote, which passed, Brat said, “Congress has shown that it cares more about special interests than Americans’ interests.” Brat concluded, emphasizing that it “is important that we keep Ex-Im expired to show the American people that we stand with them, not for cronyism.”

Immigration

Another issue of key importance to Congressman Brat has been immigration, specifically President Obama’s unconstitutional executive actions to grant deferred action (i.e., temporary amnesty) for an estimated four to five million illegal immigrants in the United States. On December 4, 2014, while in his first month in office, Brat voted for the Preventing Executive Overreach on Immigration Act of 2014 (H.R. 5759), which was introduced by Congressman Ted Yoho (R-Fla.). This bill targeted the president’s illegal executive action on amnesty. It would, as we previously reported in *The New American’s* “Freedom Index,” prohibit the executive branch of the federal government from:

(1) exempting or deferring, by executive order, regulation, or any other means, categories of aliens considered under the existing immigration laws to be unlawfully present in the United States from removal under such laws; (2) treating such aliens as if they were lawfully present or had a lawful immigration status; or (3) treating such aliens other than as unauthorized aliens as defined in current immigration laws.

Of his vote in favor of the constitutional restrictive measure, Brat tweeted, “Today I voted yes on HR 5759, but this is only a FIRST step. Congress must finish the job and actually defund Obama’s amnesty program.” Fortunately, Brat was soon given the opportunity to defund Obama’s executive amnesty.

During consideration of the Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act (H.R. 240), Congressman Robert Aderholt (R-Ala.) introduced an amendment that would defund and prevent any funds for implementing president’s illegal executive amnesty. Aderholt’s amendment would also prohibit illegal immigrants from receiving any federal benefits. Brat voted for the amendment on January 14, 2015.

In a guest article written by Brat and published in his local hometown *Chesterfield Observer* newspaper, he wrote, “Defunding Mr. Obama’s illegal act is a stand on principle and an even greater stand on adhering to the Constitution.” He further stated, “Our Constitution, rule of law, and economic prosperity are precisely the things that we will be giving up if we allow the president to break our laws to give amnesty and work permits to those who are here illegally.”

In the same article, Brat went on to say that the “president’s amnesty is not only illegal, it is patently unconstitutional,” and further warned of the consequences of allowing the president to get away with it. “If Congress fails to stop his overreach, future presidents will continue to expand the power of the Executive Branch beyond its legal boundaries, threatening the very liberty of the American people,” he said.

ObamaTrade

Congressman Brat has stood up not only to the president’s amnesty agenda but also against ObamaTrade, specifically the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). Negotiated between the United States and 11 other Pacific Rim nations (Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New



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Zealand, Peru, Singapore, and Vietnam), the TPP aims to establish the world's largest trade zone, with the goal of further expanding into a larger regional economic union known as the Free Trade Area of the Asia Pacific (FTAAP), which would include additional states such as Communist China. The TPP also mimicks the European Union with its call for establishing a governing TPP Commission, akin to the governing European Commission of the EU, to oversee the affairs of its member states.

Skeptical about this anti-sovereignty "trade" scheme, Brat twice voted against granting the president Trade Promotion Authority (TPA), in May and June of 2015, to conclude the TPP agreement. In addition to empowering the executive branch, TPA also enables Congress to eventually "fast track" the TPP, meaning that when the trade agreement does come for a vote, debate will be limited, amendments or modifications to the TPP will be prohibited, and only a simple majority (50 percent plus one of voting congressmen) will be required to pass the agreement.

On June 11, 2015, conservative talk-radio host Glenn Beck interviewed Brat about his anti-TPA votes and his opposition to the TPP. Prior to the administration's release of the text of the trade pact, Brat expressed his frustration: "You got to go into a security bunker to read the thing ... and I've done that.... When you come out, I'm not supposed to say what's in it. And I'm called a representative of the people, and it's hard to represent the people when the people don't have views because they can't read it." When Beck asked him to elaborate what is wrong with the agreement, Brat responded:

It's a living document. The scariest part of it is that it creates this Trans-Pacific Partnership Commission. And that commission will likely have the authority to not only change its membership and the agreement itself, but to issue regulations relating to immigration, environmental policy, currency policy, labor policy. It's an open-ended commission.

Regarding the TPP Commission's power to "change its membership," as Brat stated, he went on to note that "President Obama hinted that maybe China will enter this thing." About China's possible ascension to the TPP, Brat sarcastically said, "Well, that's a little detail, right, I mean, whether China joins. Maybe that matters." Later during the interview, Brat told Beck that the aspects of the agreement such as the powers of the TPP Commission should be debatable, and because of these concerns and more he voted against TPA and will vote nay on the TPP when it comes up for a vote.

These primarily economic issues — the budget, fiscal restraint, cutting off the funding to the president's unconstitutional executive amnesty, and trade — are only the tip of the iceberg on where Brat gets right what the establishment continuously gets wrong. Had it been the record of Congressman Eric Cantor or another one of his handpicked neoconservative establishment GOP cronies that was examined in this article, the opposite would likely have been said. These were the main issues that Brat hit Cantor on when challenging his seat in the primary, and nearly a year and a half into his first term in office, Brat has distinguished himself by living up to his initial promises.

Photo of Congressman David Brat: AP Images



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