



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on September 26, 2013

After 21 Hours, Cruz Rests His Case — and Legs

Over the course of the last two days, Americans have learned just how long Sen. Ted Cruz's (R-Texas) legs can hold out. At 2:41 p.m. Tuesday he rose to his feet on the Senate floor, [saying](#), "I intend to speak in support of defunding ObamaCare until I am no longer able to stand." At noon Wednesday — 21 hours and 19 minutes later — Cruz yielded to the start of a new day of Senate business, although he could have continued speaking for another hour under Senate rules.



It was not, technically speaking, a filibuster; but as the [fourth-longest speech](#) ever uttered in the Senate, it was certainly a demonstration of remarkable stamina. Whether it achieves its objective, preventing Congress from passing a continuing resolution (CR) that funds ObamaCare, remains to be seen. But one thing is for sure: Nearly everyone in the country now knows who Cruz is and why he is so adamantly opposed to the unconstitutional monstrosity known as the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

Although Cruz mostly stayed on message throughout his marathon speech, touching on the law's numerous negatives such as its effects on jobs, economic growth, and insurance premiums, he did take time out to read bedtime stories to his two daughters: verses from the biblical book of Proverbs and Dr. Seuss' *Green Eggs and Ham*. He was also spelled occasionally by like-minded colleagues, including Sens. Rand Paul (R-Ky.), Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), and Mike Lee (R-Utah).

Cruz argued that the Senate should not even proceed with debate on — let alone pass — a CR passed by the House of Representatives. That resolution, at the urging of conservatives such as Cruz, funds every federal agency and program except ObamaCare. However, Cruz fears that the Senate will restore the funding for the ACA, as Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) has indicated he will, and then the House will pass that version of the CR.

"Any senator who votes (to move forward with debate on the House measure) is voting to give Harry Reid the authority to fund ObamaCare," Cruz [told](#) CNN's Dana Bash on Monday.

Yet even before Cruz had begun his "talkathon," a majority of Senate Republicans had already indicated that they intended to vote for cloture, allowing the bill to proceed toward a final vote.

"I think we'd all be hard pressed to explain why we're opposed to a bill we're in favor of," Senate Minority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) (R-Ky.) told reporters early Tuesday afternoon. "Invoking cloture on a bill that defunds ObamaCare, doesn't raise taxes, and respects the Budget Control Act, strikes me as a no-brainer."

In the end, within two hours of wrapping up his speech, even Cruz himself voted for cloture, as did all 99 of his fellow senators — a confusing decision, to say the least. One Cruz aide told CNN that "the senator always intended to allow formal consideration of the House measure, adding that Cruz would vote against it once Senate Democrats restored the ObamaCare funding." However, CNN observed, "nothing in Cruz's words or actions preceding the vote indicated that was his intention."



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Democrats were, naturally, disdainful of Cruz's approach. Reid called the speech a "waste of time," especially when the nation faces a government shutdown if Congress does not pass a CR by Monday. [Sen. Tom Harkin](#) (D-Iowa) said Republicans were risking a shutdown over their "obsession" with the ACA. "The good news," he added, "is that obsessive-compulsive disorder is covered under ObamaCare."

Not all Republicans were on board, either.

According to the *Washington Post*, "After Cruz ended his talkathon, Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) blasted the freshman senator from Texas for suggesting during his speech that Republican lawmakers had not fought hard enough to stop the health-care law before Congress passed it in March 2010. McCain said he 'campaign[ed] all over America' last year to 'repeal and replace ObamaCare.' But 'much to my dismay,' he said, 'the people spoke ... and they reelected the president of the United States,' who had campaigned on going ahead with the law."

"Ted Cruz is a fraud," [Rep. Peter King](#) (R-N.Y.) told CNN, adding that he hopes Cruz "will no longer have any influence in the Republican Party."

Sen. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.) told CNN he believed that rather than trying to delay Senate passage of a CR that will inevitably include ObamaCare funding, Senate Republicans should help speed its passage so that their colleagues in the House will have more time to respond with a compromise such as delaying implementation of the individual mandate. As it stands now, the resolution is likely to go back to the House on Sunday, leaving House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) little time to amend it before a final vote.

Cruz's oratory also drew mixed reactions outside Capitol Hill.

Liberals, of course, did not like it. The *Guardian's* [Gary Younge](#) called Cruz a "clown" who is "turning Congress into his circus." He even likened Cruz's approach to George Wallace's 1963 stand against integrating the University of Alabama; and though he denied implying that Cruz was motivated by race, he then turned around and compared Cruz's speech to Sen. Strom Thurmond's filibuster of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

[Paul Whitefield](#) of the *Los Angeles Times* labeled Cruz's speech a "flop" when it came to stopping ObamaCare. As far as Whitefield is concerned, it was solely about politics: "As the opening salvo in a presidential campaign," he wrote, Cruz's "talkathon ... worked just fine."

Over at the *Daily Beast*, [Patricia Murphy](#) saw the speech as both a launching pad for a Cruz presidential run and a way to bring in big bucks to the Senate Conservatives Fund and other GOP-aligned groups. The speech itself, she declared, was "a fake fight over a fake vote."

Those with conservative convictions, even while questioning whether Cruz's strategy will succeed, tended to applaud his attempt.

In a lengthy interview of Cruz just after he'd left the Senate floor, [Rush Limbaugh](#) told the senator that he's been getting e-mail from people who are "so uplifted by" Cruz's actions and are "so happy that there finally is some leadership."

"There's a lot of appreciation and a lot of love for what you're doing out there," Limbaugh added.

[Chris Chocola](#), president of the Club for Growth, said in a statement, "Americans owe Sen. Ted Cruz a debt of gratitude for standing on principle in the fight to stop ObamaCare."

National Review's [David French](#) wrote that he considers Cruz's speech one of the "key turning points



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for the conservative movement.” The Left, he argued, has transformed America “through the sheer force of will expressed by a passionate minority,” and the Right can do likewise. “People with conviction dictate the terms of debate, transform the decision-making paradigm of even the largest entities, and lay the groundwork for larger cultural transformation,” French averred. Cruz, he believes, is one of those “people with conviction.”

Only time will tell whether Cruz and other conservatives in Washington can rid America of ObamaCare in the face of opposition from both Democrats and establishment Republicans. But whether they win or lose, it is certainly a fight worth having.

Photo of Sen. Ted Cruz: AP Images

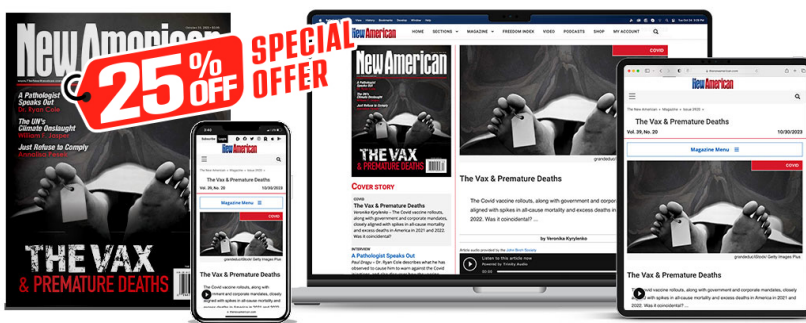


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