



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on January 18, 2012

House Offers Protest Vote as Obama Raises Debt Ceiling Again

While the Republican-controlled House voted 239-176 on January 18 to block the latest increase, that action was seen as little more than symbolic, since under last summer's notorious budget deal Congress agreed to allow for a \$2 trillion increase in the ceiling in exchange for proportionate spending cuts in the federal budget.

According to the [Los Angeles Times](#), the President was to be given the increase in three separate installments, with the most recent, for \$1.2 trillion, to be the final extension. "Congress agreed to a series of votes on the requests that would force lawmakers to repeatedly go on record on the issue of additional debt authority," reported the *Times*. While the House went through the motions of rejecting the increase, the resolution was expected to die in the Democrat-controlled Senate — meaning that the President will have the final installment of his multi-trillion-dollar budget bonanza negotiated last August.



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As reported by the *Congressional Quarterly (CQ)*, even if the rejection "did somehow get through the Senate, Obama would surely veto it. Assuming that no disapproval resolution is enacted, the debt ceiling will increase Jan. 27."

Before the House vote, *CQ* noted that for Republican legislators the matter represented "an awkward final chapter to the August debt ceiling deal." The largely symbolic vote occurred on a resolution ([H.J. Res. 98](#)) "to disapprove the third installment of increased borrowing authority authorized by the August debt ceiling agreement ([P.L. 112-25](#)), which narrowly averted an unprecedented government default," noted *CQ*. "The law immediately raised the debt limit by \$400 billion. An additional \$500 billion was added in September, despite a similar disapproval effort."

Representative Ron Paul's office announced that the Congressman took time from his presidential campaigning in South Carolina to fly back for the vote in Washington. The [Washington Times](#) said that the vote was a "no-brainer for Mr. Paul, now in his 12th term, who has made a career out of voting against spending bills and debt increases."

The paper added that the vote would also give Paul an opportunity "to highlight another difference with some of his competitors, former Sen. Rick Santorum and former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, who



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supported debt increases during their time in Congress.”

In announcing Paul’s return to Washington for the debt ceiling vote, his campaign team also pointed to a new TV ad, entitled “[Three of a Kind](#),” which it said dealt with the “serial hypocrisy, counterfeit conservatism, and flip-flopping of his rivals Newt Gingrich, Rick Santorum, and Mitt Romney respectively.”

Meanwhile, a group called the [Club for Growth](#), which promotes “limited government, low taxes and economic freedom” in the context of Republican congressional races, took some GOP lawmakers to task for posing as fiscally conservative through the largely meaningless vote. According to the *CQ*, the conservative group “has singled out for criticism the 174 House Republicans and 28 GOP senators who voted for the August debt limit agreement.” (Rep. Paul is *not* one of these lawmakers, since he voted against the debt limit agreement last August.)

In an e-mail to reporters before the vote, the Club for Growth’s communications director, Barney Keller, wrote that the “hypocrisy of many of these so-called ‘tea party conservatives’ will be on full display” as they officially express their opposition to raising the debt ceiling. Keller encouraged reporters “to ask any of the ... Republicans who express their outrage over a \$1.2 trillion debt limit increase why they voted for the law that allowed the debt limit increase in the first place.”

Representative Tim Huelskamp (R-Kan.) added a likeminded opinion in the days before the vote, saying that any one of his Republican colleagues “who supported this deal back in August but then votes to oppose the debt limit increase this upcoming week should take no credit for standing against reckless spending.”



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