



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on November 20, 2014

## Lame-duck GOP House Approves Tax Hike on Duck Hunters

Anyone expecting the upcoming Republican Congress to start hacking away at taxes and unconstitutional laws might want to consider what the already GOP-controlled House of Representatives approved on Monday: a \$119-million tax hike.

Despite a threat from a conservative group to hold congressmen accountable for voting for the bill, the House passed the Federal Duck Stamp Act of 2014, which would increase the price of federal migratory waterfowl hunting permits, also known as duck stamps, from \$15 to \$25. Anyone wishing to hunt migratory waterfowl such as ducks and geese must purchase a duck stamp annually.



The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) [estimates](#) the tax will raise \$119 million. That revenue would be used to purchase easements for wetlands conservation.

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In remarks on the House floor, Rep. John Fleming (R-La.), who sponsored the bill, said it would “modestly increase” the duck stamp fee — by 67 percent. He argued that the increase is necessary “to restore the buying power of the conservation tool which has been used to acquire, conserve, lease, and restore thousands of acres of wetlands.” Left unmentioned was the reason for the erosion of the fee’s purchasing power since 1991, when it was last raised: the Federal Reserve’s relentless inflation of the money supply. Nor did Fleming point to any provision of the Constitution that gives the federal government the authority either to mandate waterfowl hunting permits or to buy up land for conservation.

Fleming did note, however, that the “legislation has been endorsed by Ducks Unlimited and more than 30 national conservation organizations,” many of whom (he again failed to mention) would prefer to have someone else foot the bill for conservation. To be fair, though, some of the endorsing organizations’ members will get stuck paying the extra \$10 a year; the National Rifle Association, the Boone and Crockett Club, and the National Wild Turkey Federation are among the bill’s supporters.

House Budget Committee chairman Rep. Paul Ryan (R-Wis.), who has been accused of being a budget slasher and Ayn Rand acolyte, also spoke in favor of the tax hike, declaring himself “a proud supporter of this legislation.” He stumped for exempting the bill from the House’s “cut-as-you-go” rule, which prohibits hiking taxes to offset new spending, on the grounds that the bill increases “user fees, not taxes” — a distinction without much of a difference — and, according to the CBO’s projections, “reduces the deficit” by \$5 million, assuming Congress doesn’t raise spending.

Americans for Prosperity (AFP) wasn’t buying any of this guff. Just before the House was scheduled to



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vote on the duck stamp bill, the conservative political-advocacy group issued a [press release](#) blasting the proposed fee hike.

“Just weeks after voters repudiated the liberal agenda of high taxes and out of control spending,” AFP wrote, “the scrooges in Congress want to ask American families for even more of their paycheck to help fund a bloated, oversized government that cannot properly do the few things it is supposed to be doing, never mind all of the things it is not supposed to be doing.”

AFP reminded readers that the federal government “took in more money this year than ever before” — over \$3 trillion — yet “squandered much of it wastefully and inefficiently.”

“Duck stamp revenue,” the group continued, “fits the bill of Washington ineptitude — the tax on hunters is used to give more land to the federal government, which already owns over a quarter of all the land in the country and cannot manage it properly.”

AFP threatened to “key vote” the legislation on their Congressional scorecard, making it clear to their 2.5 million activists which of their elected officials — there’s a companion Senate bill sponsored by Sen. David Vitter (R-La.) — voted for the bill. “A vote in favor of this middle-class tax increase would undoubtedly ruffle the feathers of voters back home,” the group stated.

House leaders easily parried the threat of a bad showing on AFP’s scorecard. “Although the measure was slated to be voted on at 6:30 p.m. Monday evening, according to a leadership agenda, it was voice voted instead, meaning no lawmaker had to go on record for or against the bill,” reported [Politico](#).

Thus, Americans will never know which of their representatives voted to increase this unconstitutional tax on duck hunters — and for that they ought to be crying fowl.



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