



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on September 23, 2013

Lawmakers Dispute Over How to Avoid Government Shutdown

Lawmakers continue to [struggle](#) to reach an agreement that would keep the government open past September 30. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid will be setting up a test vote on a House-passed bill this week that would fund the government past September 30 if lawmakers agree to defund ObamaCare.



While lawmakers all seem to agree that the government should not be permitted to shut down, Democrats and Republicans cannot agree on the “defund ObamaCare” provision. Reid and his colleagues seek to remove the provision from the bill, a maneuver that Republicans obviously do not support. Therefore, Fox News reports, “Tea Party-aligned senators like Ted Cruz have rallied around an only-in-Washington kind of approach — in order to defend the House bill which they supported, they will try to block Reid from calling it up.”

The result if Republicans are successful in blocking the bill would be neither chamber voting on anything that could keep the government in business after September 30.

Of course, this is just one result of Congress not passing a real budget since 2009. Every few months, the federal government experiences this sort of melodrama when it is time to vote on these short-term spending resolutions.

Both parties are beginning to fear the consequences of a government shutdown.

Republican Senator Pat Toomey of Pennsylvania said on Monday that he believes his party may need to relax its demands. Rather than pursuing a provision that would completely defund ObamaCare, Toomey suggests that Republicans instead aim to repeal “some of the really egregious things” found within the healthcare law. “I don’t think we’re going to be able to completely defund ObamaCare as long as President Obama’s in the White House,” Toomey said.

Toomey asserts that Republicans should target items in the law such as the medical device tax, and should continue to push for a delay in the individual mandate. Toomey’s latest assertions are illustrative of the divide in the Republican Party on this issue. Fox News reports:

Many GOP lawmakers want to repeal ObamaCare entirely, warning that it is driving Americans off their current health care plans and, because of quirks in the law, forcing others into part-time work. But many also say that, with Democrats controlling the Senate and White House, defunding it is simply not possible.



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One such Republican is Senator Tom Coburn of Oklahoma, who said on the CBS show *Face the Nation*, “We don’t have the ability ... to put a total stop and defund ObamaCare. It would be nice if we did. I’d be in the fight.”

Coburn ultimately believes that Reid will acquire enough votes to remove the ObamaCare language from the bill and send it back to the House. Furthermore, he does not believe the government will be permitted to shut down.

But according to Fox News, there are multiple possibilities:

Cruz and his allies could successfully stall the bill in the Senate, forcing concessions or forcing a shutdown come Oct. 1.

Or, Reid could succeed in calling up the bill, stripping out the ObamaCare language and sending it back to the House. Then House Speaker John Boehner would be forced to decide whether to stick by his party’s demands to defund ObamaCare, or call up the clean budget bill, relying on perhaps a majority of Democrats to pass it.

Senator Cruz also proposed another scenario. He told *Fox News Sunday* that the House should “hold its ground” and begin passing smaller spending bills, “one department at a time.”

“Fund the military, send it over, and let’s see if Harry Reid is willing to shut down the military because he wants to force ObamaCare on the American people,” Cruz offered.

Cruz is encouraging his Republican colleagues in the Senate to [filibuster](#) to stop Reid from adding language to the bill that would remove the provision that defunds ObamaCare. Cruz went so far as to say that any Senate Republican who does not filibuster is actually supporting ObamaCare.

“Any vote to allow Harry Reid to add funding — a vote for cloture is a vote for ObamaCare,” Cruz told Fox News’ Chris Wallace. “And I think they will stand side by side and listen to the people and stop this train wreck that is ObamaCare.”

Cruz’s declarations have caused him to be ostracized by some members of his party. Senator Tom Coburn said that the Republican position on this issue must be based on “reality,” and that reality is that the Republicans do not have the votes in the Senate that they need.

Libertarian-leaning Senator Rand Paul (R-Ky.) admitted last week that he does not believe the push to defund ObamaCare through the Continuing Resolution will succeed, but added that he celebrates the efforts and is hopeful that they will ultimately force a compromise on the worst aspects of the law.

“I’m acknowledging that we probably can’t defeat or get rid of ObamaCare but by starting with our position of not funding it maybe we get to a position where we make it less bad,” Paul told reporters at the Republican Leadership Conference in Mackinac Island, Michigan.

Paul also took the opportunity to emphasize the other harsh realities of the Continuing Resolution in question:

In the end the sausage factory in Washington will make sausage. Nothing good will happen though. They’ll pass a continuing resolution. When they do that though, they’re acknowledging that we’re borrowing \$30,000 a second and I think that’s unconscionable.

Paul points out that the short-term spending resolutions offered by Congress, with or without the language to defund ObamaCare, remains detrimental to the economy and to the American people. He contends that the House version of the Continuing Resolution is flawed because it funds the federal



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government around \$19 billion above the levels set by the Budget Control Act of 2011. That alone is enough to provoke a dissenting vote from him.

“I’m not planning on voting for any funding for ObamaCare, [Paul told Bill Hemmer of Fox News last week](#). “I’m also not voting for any funding that breaks the sequester. We really have to do something about this spending problem, this debt problem. I’m not going to vote for ObamaCare. I think it’s a disaster for the country.”

And while the Republican Party is split on how to proceed, the Democrats have the luxury of enjoying a united front on the subject. Senator Reid has asserted that any bill that defunds ObamaCare is “dead,” and President Obama has declared that efforts to pass legislation aimed at defunding the healthcare law are “not going to happen.”



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