



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on October 14, 2011

McCain: No Defense Cuts if Supercommittee Deadlocks

The latest development on the subject, according to [Politico](#), is that Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), ranking Republican on the House Armed Services Committee, “is vowing to ‘nullify’ part of a law that would impose major military cuts if the deficit panel can’t reach a deal.” In short, McCain wants to repeal the part of the debt-ceiling deal that triggers automatic cuts to defense spending if the supercommittee fails to reach agreement on its own plan to reduce the deficit by \$1.2 trillion over 10 years. (The law also requires equivalent cuts in domestic spending, but McCain did not address that matter.)



“If there is a failure on the part of the supercommittee,” McCain said during a news conference yesterday, “we will be amongst the first on the floor to nullify that provision. Congress is not bound by this. It’s something we passed. We can reverse it.”

McCain added that — like his fellow Arizona Senator, Jon Kyl, who threatened to resign from the supercommittee if defense cuts were even suggested — he “will fight any additional cuts in defense spending,” though he averred that “there are efficiencies that can still be imposed,” particularly in the area of procurement overruns.

Furthermore, McCain suggested that other Senators, including Armed Services Committee Carl Levin (D-Mich.), agree with him. Levin, however, stated that discussing the elimination of the triggered cuts while the supercommittee is still meeting would “[take] some of the pressure off and [undermine] the whole purpose of the trigger.” He did not, it should be noted, disagree that the trigger should be eliminated if the supercommittee fails, just that the possibility should not be discussed at this time. In fact, “he agreed the automatic cuts would be ‘totally unacceptable’ and a ‘nuclear weapon that hits all kinds of important things excessively,’” *Politico* reports.

Among those “important things” are billions of taxpayer dollars that benefit defense contractors in Levin’s home state. In June, for instance, he proudly [announced](#) that the 2012 National Defense Authorization Act would pour over \$10 billion into Michigan’s economy. Therefore, it is likely that McCain was correct in his assertion that Levin won’t allow defense cuts to occur; Levin simply prefers to continue with the trigger charade for the time being.

Many observers believe that undoubtedly McCain, Levin, and other legislators will also come to the aid of domestic spending should the automatic cuts be triggered. The votes that would redound to those who “save” federal wealth-transfer schemes surely would outweigh the mildly negative press they might receive for having prevented deficit reduction.

Those automatic cuts are almost certain to be set in motion given that the likelihood is next to nil that the supercommittee will agree on any deficit-reduction plan. The committee is [stacked](#) with legislators



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beholden to the military-industrial complex and is [chummy with lobbyists](#) seeking to prevent any and all spending cuts. Knowing that Congress will never allow the automatic cuts to go into effect, as both McCain's and Levin's comments clearly indicate, the supercommittee has no incentive whatsoever to reach an agreement. They can just wait out the deadline, after which members of each party can blame the opposing party for the committee's failure, and Congress will see to it that no spending reductions actually take place.

Critics note that the big spenders in both parties got what they wanted from the August debt deal: an immediate increase in the debt limit along with easily broken promises of future spending cuts. Meanwhile, they say, taxpayers got taken for a ride.

Photo of John McCain: AP Images



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