

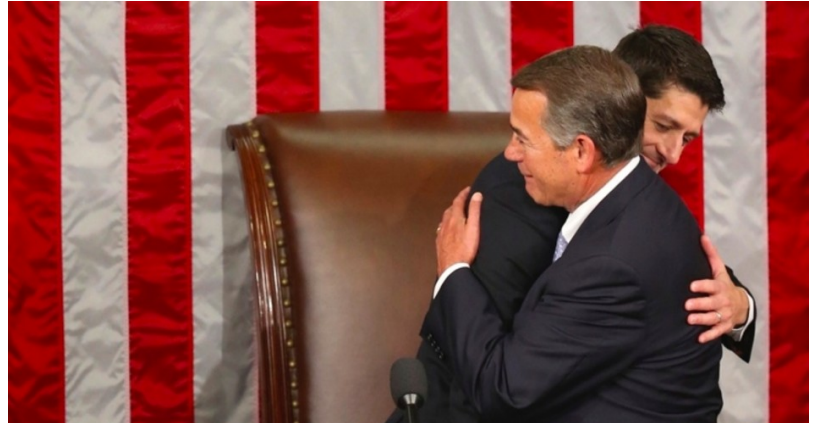


Written by [Steve Byas](#) on December 17, 2015

Paul Ryan, John Boehner: What's the Difference?

Fiscal conservatives who hoped House Speaker Paul Ryan would put up more of a fight against President Barack Obama and the congressional Democrats have reason to be disappointed with the unveiling of the new congressional budget.

The budget increases federal spending and hands victory after victory over to the White House and Obama's Democratic allies in the Congress.



The budget continues full funding for Planned Parenthood, the organization revealed to having been involved in the sale of baby body parts. Sanctuary cities — localities that ignore federal immigration law and harbor illegal aliens — will continue receiving federal funds uninterrupted. Visas for foreign workers, which lead to the displacement of American workers, received an increase in funding. Democrats won extensions of tax credits for solar and wind production. Efforts to block Obama's executive actions on immigration were not included in the bill.

Exactly how the budget bill would differ from a bill negotiated by former House Speaker John Boehner is hard to determine.

Republicans were able to insert a repeal on the ban of crude oil to foreigners, but that is hardly the kind of victory that excites the Republicans' conservative base. Rather, it is revealing of just who is important to Republican leaders in Congress, and who has the better lobbyists. Kansas Republican Tim Huelskamp agreed with lifting the ban, but he said he did not receive a single call in favor of the action. Instead, his calls were all about Syrian refugees, the funding of Planned Parenthood, and several other concerns.

Not surprisingly, members of the House Freedom Caucus, the group which is largely responsible for forcing Boehner out of Congress, are not pleased with the new budget. Huelskamp, who is a member of the caucus, predicted that a majority of Republicans would vote no on the \$1.1 trillion appropriations bill. He's calling the package the "Boehner legacy bill." Another member of the Caucus, Jim Jordan, agrees that few Republican members of the House will support the bill, either.

Representative Justin Amash, a Michigan Republican who is also a Caucus member, had objections about the cybersecurity language added to the bill.

"It's pretty bad," complained Freedom Caucus chairman Representative Jim Jordan of Ohio. "How can you not put the refugee issue in there? It makes so much sense. We were clear that if that goes in and [we get] something pretty good on the pro-life, we thought we could get a number of us" to vote for the bill. "But that's not going to happen."

So, Ryan will most likely construct a coalition of so-called moderate Republicans and mostly House Democrats to pass the bill. This, of course, was the Boehner way of advancing spending bills during his tenure. When Ryan was under consideration for the speakership, he wooed conservatives by promising to abide by the Hastert Rule (named for former Speaker Denny Hastert). The Hastert Rule stipulated that the speaker would allow votes only on bills enjoying the support of the majority of the Republicans.



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But Ryan is not following the Hastert Rule with this budget. He is instead implementing the governing coalition used by his predecessor, John Boehner.

Despite predictable grumbling from the more conservative members of the House, such as Freedom Caucus members, Ryan appears safe in his position as speaker, at least for now. Representative David Brat, the man who pulled off one of the great upsets of American political history when he defeated former House Majority Leader Eric Cantor in a Republican primary in Virginia, criticized the budget deal ("We're breaking our pledge on the budget caps"), but he also had cautious praise for Ryan.

"Not only is he saying the right things, he is lining it up to do the right things."

Arizona Republican Representative Matt Salmon agreed. "Paul [Ryan] made some pretty sustainable commitments about things we'll do next year: a major overhaul of our tax system, welfare reform, replacing Obamacare. These are major things. If we do those things and define clearly what we stand for, that's the best we can hope for."

"In terms of process, I can tell you I've had more meaningful conversations with the speaker and leadership in the last couple of weeks than I think I have in the last couple of years," added Representative Mark Meadows, a North Carolina Republican. It was Meadows who headed the charge against Boehner that eventually led to his resignation last fall. "I would give it an A-plus in terms of trying to reach out to the rank and file."

One concrete action taken by Ryan that is encouraging to some Freedom Caucus members is that he has already begun the budget process for 2016. A large part of the problem for the past several years has been the failure of the House to develop a budget early enough to vote on the various parts of that budget separately. This has led to the series of "continuing resolutions" of recent years, which has led to a subtle shift in budget-making power away from Congress to a liberal president such as Obama. Obama can threaten to veto the budget if the Republicans put things in the bill he does not like, and blame the Republicans for "shutting down the government." With his allies in the mainstream media, the public is led to believe it is all the Republicans' fault. Many Republicans in Congress quake in fear of being blamed for "shutting down the government."

The next budget vote is slated in the fall of next year, in the middle of the presidential campaign. We can expect to hear suggestions that Republicans in the House should avoid a confrontation with Obama over the budget, so as not to hurt the Republican nominee. "Let's wait until we have a Republican president to take serious action on the budget" will be the probable plea.

Voters were told that Republicans will take "serious action" if they get control of the House. After they did win the House in the 2010 elections, little was done, because the argument then was that the Democrats still controlled the Senate, and besides, we have a presidential election in 2012. Then, in 2014, the Republicans took the Senate and kept the House, and the Republican base was told, once again, to "wait," since Obama will just veto any substantive action on important issues. And, of course, he can blame the Republicans.

A year from now, the Paul Ryan "honeymoon" will be over, and we will get to see the extent to which he will honor his "marriage vows" to the Republicans in Congress and to the country.

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