



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on October 3, 2013

House GOP Winning With Ted Cruz's "Piecemeal" Strategy

The House Republican leadership has adopted Texas Senator [Ted Cruz's strategy](#) for fighting back against the Obama administration promise to vote down all government spending until the House approves a spending bill funding ObamaCare. Cruz suggested a piecemeal approach to funding the federal government budget, rather than through the extraordinary "omnibus continuing resolution" that has brought a congressional deadlock between the GOP-controlled House and the Democrat-controlled Senate.



"I think we ought to start passing continuing resolutions narrowly focused on each of the things the President listed," Cruz [told](#) CNN's Wolf Blitzer September 30, "We should pick the top, the critical priorities, the areas where — if the Democrats force a shutdown — the areas there will be the most pain, and let's address that. Let's take them off the table."

Indeed, that very day Congress passed a bill to fund the uniformed military services, which President Obama [pledged to sign](#). And the House is pursuing passage of five other smaller appropriations bills to fund programs such as national parks, veterans benefits, and National Guard pay.

Despite promises by the White House and Senate leaders to kill the bills, the Cruz strategy has changed the nature of the shutdown debate in Washington. "This whole Congress has been on Cruz control for the last two or three weeks," Massachusetts Democrat Marty Meehan [complained](#) to the *Los Angeles Times* October 1. The House GOP leadership has adopted the Cruz strategy aggressively. "We are going to take every issue that is out there that we have agreement on, and put it on the floor," Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R-Va.) [said](#) at a news conference on the second day of the government shutdown.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) [labeled](#) Cruz's idea "just another wacky idea by the Tea Party-driven Republicans," promising to kill the bills. "We can't and we won't be forced to choose between parks and cancer research or disease control or highway safety or the FBI," Reid said. "This is not serious. The government's shut down. If they think they're going to come and nit-pick us on this, it won't work."

The partial government shutdown — which began when the new fiscal year began on October 1 — has resulted from an impasse over funding for ObamaCare. President Obama [postured](#) on October 1 that "as long as I am President, I will not give in to reckless demands by some in the Republican Party to deny affordable health insurance to millions of hardworking Americans." But the reality is that Republicans don't need to get any bill passed in order to defund Obamacare; all they need to do is refrain from passing a bill funding it.

House Republicans hold a constitutional stop on federal spending, and Republicans have passed several bills funding all federal spending programs other than Obama's Affordable Care Act (ObamaCare). The only hope the Obama administration has of extracting funding from the GOP House is to threaten to shut down funding for most federal programs — even though he supports all of the spending in the bills



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he's pledged to veto — in the hope that the media successfully blames the Republicans for the impasse, and that the Republicans cave to the pressure and fund ObamaCare. In other words, all Obama has is a bluff, and his only means of bluffing was to engineer a government shutdown.

By pursuing a pro-negotiation strategy and passing the budget piecemeal (as it was originally supposed to be passed), Republicans may be able to frame Obama and the Senate Democrats in the debate as spoiled brats — mid-tantrum — who prate on and on about how they will [“not negotiate.”](#) Obama's spokesmen have explicitly decried the piecemeal approach as not serious. “A piecemeal approach to funding the government is not a serious approach any more than it would be a serious way to try to deal with the consequences of default and the absolute necessity to maintain the full faith and credit of the United States,” White House Press Secretary Jay Carney [said](#) in a press conference October 1.

Of course, the *regular* process of funding the government is passing appropriations bills piecemeal. There are 12 regular appropriations bills, according to even the Democratic Party leaders of the House Appropriations Committee. The irresponsible aberration is the omnibus “continuing resolution” now demanded *ex cathedra* by the Obama White House. Even Democratic members of the appropriations committee post on their websites that the regular process is 12 separate appropriations bills annually. “The House generally begins the process with the Appropriations Committee's subcommittees (one for each of the 12 bills),” Appropriations Committee member Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.) [wrote](#) on his congressional website. And the House Democratic Appropriations Committee members put on their committee website that each of the 12 subcommittees of the Appropriations Committee “are responsible for 12 annual appropriations bills.”

Obama's paid spokesmen may claim that passing budget spending piecemeal is not serious governance, but what's not serious is passing every bit of federal spending with a single vote. Passing spending bills piecemeal is how the Congress has usually done it for two centuries, and all-in-one continuing resolutions have long been regarded as a surrender of the regular process. Omnibus spending bills were once recognized as a sign of failure in the system. However, Obama now claims that not to have a single omnibus bill funding the entire government is a failure in the system. Omnibus-only funding would be a virtual end to checks and balances if Congress only gets one up-or-down vote on everything related to government: from soldiers' pay to welfare payments to NSA snooping. How does one even rate a congressman's voting record on such a basis?

Meanwhile, the angry congressional rhetoric has reached stratospheric levels. “They took hostages by shutting down the government and now they are releasing one hostage at a time,” Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) [told Roll Call](#) after three of the five bills to fund parts of the federal government were defeated by the House. Of course, the only “hostage” the GOP wants to shoot is ObamaCare. The Democrats are holding the rest of the budget hostage to get ObamaCare funded.

And chinks in Obama's political armor have emerged, including even his own Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, who publicly [stated](#) that he would favor a piecemeal approach to funding the intelligence bureaucracy. President Obama himself engaged in an about-face in his [call for an October 2 conference with Republicans](#) on the budget. Just one day earlier Obama [pronounced](#) a hard line against negotiating with Republicans over ObamaCare: “I will not negotiate over Congress's responsibility to pay bills it's already racked up.”

The political Left has made efforts of its own, hoping to use a friendly mainstream media to browbeat Republican House members into voting for ObamaCare funding. Some on the political Left have [created](#) the political epithet [“suicide caucus”](#) for designated Republicans opposed to funding ObamaCare in



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order to peel “moderate” Republicans toward the Democratic side. Of course, “suicide caucus” as an epithet leveled against Republicans is [not new](#) to the current crisis related to ObamaCare spending. But interestingly, the epithet has been [picked up by the U.S. government’s unofficial propaganda agency, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty](#).

Photo of Sen. Ted Cruz: AP Images



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