



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on September 23, 2011

House Passes Spending Bill, Senate Rejects It Immediately

On Wednesday, the U.S. House of Representatives failed to pass a stopgap spending bill because Democrats bemoaned the spending cuts and Republicans believed the bill did not cut enough. After a few tweaks, the stopgap bill managed to pass in the House on Friday morning by a narrow vote of 219-203. However, as expected, the United States Senate blocked the bill in a party-line vote of 59 to 36, potentially sending the House leadership back to the drawing board.



On Wednesday, House Republicans suffered an embarrassing 230-195 defeat, as 48 Republicans voted against the bill, angry that it would permit spending at the same rate approved in last month's debt deal between Speaker of the House John Boehner (left) and President Obama.

Fox News notes that the bill's defeat on Wednesday is indicative of the "tenuous grip that Boehner has on the chamber."

The bill that passed in the House on Friday looks virtually identical to the one that failed on Wednesday, as it still includes \$3.7 billion in disaster aid, and now funds the federal government past next Friday. Republicans managed to convince the tea party conservatives that the only other alternative would be to give Democrats a better deal by adding more money for disaster relief, or cutting less of the \$1.5 billion proposed in spending cuts.

GOP leadership in the House changed the bill only slightly in order to persuade disenchanted Tea Party Republicans to change their vote, rather than reaching out to Democrats during the revision process. House leaders added \$100 million in savings from a program that financed a federal loan to the solar panel maker Solyndra, Inc. Fox News reports that the \$100 million came from a loan guarantee program for renewable energy projects under the 2009 stimulus: "Congress set aside \$2.4 billion in case some of the loans went bad, such as a \$500 million-plus loan to now-bankrupt Solyndra Inc., a California-based solar panel maker effusively praised by Obama."

GOP leaders in the House viewed Friday's vote as a victory, but admitted they had to make concessions.

"What we voted on yesterday was the best deal Republicans could get and it can only go downhill from here," said Republican Representative Peter King from New York. "So we should try to re-vote again on the same bill we had yesterday, vote on it again, pass it this time, or if not we'll have to make concessions that would help the Democrats."

However, the narrow victory was short-lived, as the Senate voted down the measure. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid indicated that the bill would not make it through the Senate, even before it was



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passed in the House. Fox News reports:

Even before the House vote, however, the leader of the Senate promised that majority Democrats will scuttle the measure as soon as it reaches the chamber on Friday. Democrats there want a much larger infusion of disaster aid and they're angry over cuts totaling \$1.6 trillion from clean energy programs — and the strong-arm tactics being tried by the House.

According to Reid, the House-passed bill “is not an honest effort at compromise.” Therefore, he vowed “It will be rejected by the Senate.” And rejected it was.

It was the hope of the GOP that Senate Democrats would be forced into accepting the cuts to their favored programs. That did not happen.

“We're fed up with this,” said Senator Dick Durbin of Illinois, Democratic Whip. “They know what it takes for us to extend (stopgap funding) and keep the government in business. And this brinksmanship...we're sick of it.”

He went on, “The Senate is ready to stay in Washington next week to do the work the American people expect us to do. And I hope the House Republican leadership will do the same.”

With the Senate rejecting the bill, the Federal Emergency Management Agency may be out of funds as early as next week.

Recognizing this impending reality, Boehner's spokesman, Michael Steel, attempted to convince the Senate to forge ahead. “The Senate should pass this bill immediately, and the president should sign it, because any political games will delay FEMA money that suffering American families desperately need.”

FEMA's funds sit at approximately \$212 million, but the House passed bill would add \$3.7 billion to it. The Senate proposed a separate measure that would provide \$6.9 billion to FEMA's disaster relief fund.

Meanwhile, the House stopgap spending bill would have kept the federal government running through November 18. The legislation includes a 1.5 percent cut on domestic and defense agencies in order to meet the target of \$1.043 trillion for 2012.

The failure of the House bill to pass the Senate is the start of the next showdown between House Republicans and Senate Democrats. Prior to the bill's failure in the Senate, House Majority Whip Kevin McCarthy declared that the bill is a “great opportunity to move forward,” but Democratic Senator Ed Markey of Massachusetts said the GOP was “kneecapping” alternative energy initiatives and Rep. John Dingell accused Republicans of “busily burning our seed corn.”

Dingell went on, “The end result of this is we're going to see advanced technology programs going to China instead of being made here.”

Senator Reid did attempt a compromise, however. Yahoo News reports:

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., offered a compromise Friday that would accept the House's lower level of disaster spending but lacked the loan program cuts. Republicans refused to let the chamber approve it, but the Senate will consider it Monday, when Republicans seem likely to prevent Democrats from getting the 60 votes they would need to prevail.

Last week, the Senate passed a spending bill that would provide \$6.9 billion in disaster aid, without a single cut to pay for it. The bill had the support of 10 Republican Senators.

Senate Minority leader Mitch McConnell contends that the American people do not want to see any



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more money added to the deficit, even if it is for the touted purpose of “emergency spending.”

"If there's any lesson we can draw from the debates we've been having here over the last six months, it's that the American people won't accept that excuse anymore," McConnell said. "The whole, 'that's the way we've always done it' argument is the reason we've got a \$14 trillion dollar debt right now."

Likewise, House Appropriations Committee Chairman Harold Rogers said, "The American people are sick and tired of political games. Shutting down the government and cutting off essential programs that our people rely on is bad enough, but leaving disaster-stricken families and communities in the lurch in their hour of greatest need is simply reprehensible."

What this means for government funding is unknown. The House and Senate had planned to take next week off, but that seems unlikely at this point.



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