



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on October 6, 2013

Obama Complains About Lack of Same Spending He's Pledged To Veto

President Obama complained about the shutdown of parts of the federal Head Start pre-school nutritional assistance program in his [weekly address](#) October 5, even though he has already [pledged to veto](#) straightforward Republican bills that would fund similar programs.

Obama argued in his [weekly presidential address](#) that children who had benefited from Head Start programs are suffering under the shutdown. He cited one letter from an Alabama citizen:



Kelly Mumper lives in rural Alabama. She works in early education, and has three children of her own in the Marines. Here's what she wrote to me on Wednesday.

"Our Head Start agency ... was forced to stop providing services on October 1st for over 770 children, and 175 staff were furloughed. I am extremely concerned for the welfare of these children."

Yet if handed a simple congressional bill to fund childhood nutrition programs such as the WIC (Women, Infants and Children) and Head Start programs, Obama has already raised the specter of a veto threat. He has no objection to any funding in the House-passed Women's Infant and Children Funding bill ([H.J. Res. 75](#)), but on October 3 he [pledged to veto](#) the legislation in order to force political pressure on the Republican-dominated House to pass a single spending bill for the entire federal budget, including ObamaCare.

"There's only one way out of this reckless and damaging shutdown," Obama [said](#) in his weekly address: "Pass a budget that funds our government, with no partisan strings attached." By those words, Obama means that Congress must pass funding for the entire federal budget in a single bill, and that this bill must include ObamaCare funding. Obama continued in the Saturday address: "The American people don't get to demand ransom in exchange for doing their job. Neither does Congress. They don't get to hold our democracy or our economy hostage over a settled law. They don't get to kick a child out of Head Start if I don't agree to take her parents' health insurance away. That's not how our democracy is supposed to work."

Obama's position can be summarized this way: If a bill to fund Head Start doesn't include ObamaCare funding, I'll veto it. If a bill to fund the NIH doesn't include ObamaCare funding, I'll veto it. If a bill to fund National Guard pay doesn't include ObamaCare funding, I'll veto it. If a bill to fund WIC doesn't include ObamaCare funding, I'll veto it. And by the way, the Republicans are holding the government hostage and are shutting down the government.

The Obama administration issued a "statement of administration policy" October 4 sent to House Republicans that [reiterated the veto threat](#): "The Administration strongly opposes House passage of piecemeal fiscal year 2014 appropriations legislation that restores only very limited activities.



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Consideration of appropriations bills in this fashion is not a serious or responsible way to run the United States Government."

But the "all or nothing" grandstanding by congressional Democrats and the White House has resulted in a weakened position in recent days. Obama had undercut his own position by [signing into law](#) earlier this week a bill that would fund uniformed members of the U.S. armed forces during the shutdown. It was the exact same kind of "piecemeal" budget funding that Obama has since pledged to oppose. The president's support for a separate bill to fund soldiers, but opposition to fund other federal programs drew comments of derision from Republican leaders on Capitol Hill.

"How does the White House justify signing the troop funding bill, but vetoing similar measures for veterans, National Parks, and District of Columbia?" Michael Steel, a spokesman for House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) [told](#) Politico.com. "The president can't continue to complain about the impact of the government shutdown on veterans, visitors at National Parks, and DC while vetoing bills to help them." Steel concluded that the White House's "position is unsustainably hypocritical."

Perhaps more importantly, the bargaining position of Democratic leadership in Washington weakened significantly during last week, as an increasing number of rank-and-file House Democrats have crossed the aisle in recent days to vote for Republican measures to fund specific programs: 22 House Democrats [voted](#) for a bill to fund the WIC program, 23 [voted](#) for separate bills to fund national parks/museums and the [FEMA program](#), 25 [voted](#) for funding the National Institutes of Health, and 36 [voted](#) to pay the National Guard.

Much of the Democratic argument to fund ObamaCare has been based upon the concept that ObamaCare is "settled law," and that government commitments need to be funded. But Congress has always created programs by law and ended or cut them by throttling funding. President Obama himself has been a cheerleader of cutting programs by cutting funding.

One recent example of this is the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, which, according to the Government Accountability Office, [requires](#) that under law "F-35 acquisition funding requirements average \$12.6 billion annually through 2037." Yet President Obama — who used the argument in the Saturday address to argue that all "settled law" needed to be funded — not only lobbied Congress this year to cut funding of the F-35 procurement required under existing law, but he also issued a [veto threat](#) against that same funding in 2011. This same veto threat also drew praise from some of same Democratic congressmen who have complained most loudly about the shutdown. "I commend President Obama for his continued opposition to the Alternate Engine program and his willingness to veto any defense bill that would allow additional taxpayer funding to be spent on the GE/Rolls Royce F-35 'Extra Engine,' " Congressman John Larson wrote on his congressional website back in 2011. Larson made national news last week with a [bombastic rant](#) against Republicans on the eve of the shutdown.

Under [Article I, Section 9 of the U.S. Constitution](#), the president and the Senate cannot force the House of Representatives to fund ObamaCare or any other federal program. So unless 17 or more Republicans break ranks with the GOP leadership and side with Democrats in procedural votes, House Speaker John Boehner holds a winning hand in the budget battle.

Interestingly, while Obama's weekly propaganda message from the Oval Office was being broadcast to the world during the shutdown, the [Armed Forces Network broadcasting of sports events to troops serving abroad went dark](#) because of White House shutdown decisions.



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