



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on December 4, 2012

Party Over Principle: Boehner Boots Conservatives off Budget Committee

In a speech to the House of Representatives in January 2011, then newly-elected Speaker of the House John Boehner (R-Ohio) [vowed that he would “renew focus on the Constitution.”](#) Then, on Tuesday, Boehner demonstrated his lack of fidelity to that promise by politically ostracizing two of the most staunch constitutionalists in the House.

Representatives Tim Huelskamp (R-Kan.) and Justin Amash (R-Mich.) were booted from the Budget Committee — likely a result of the two congressmen’s record of opposing the Speaker on key fiscal issues. Last year, for example, Huelskamp and Amash voted against raising the debt ceiling and are adamantly opposed to any tax increases.



And earlier this year, Huelskamp and Amash cast the only House Budget Committee votes against Paul Ryan’s budget plan that was the darling of Republicans, including Boehner.

For his part, self-described “conservative” John Boehner not only voted to increase the federal debt limit, but has now [embraced tax hikes](#) as a means of avoiding falling off the “fiscal cliff.”

Huelskamp [released a statement](#) following Boehner’s decision to remove him from the House Budget Committee:

It is little wonder why Congress has a 16 percent approval rating: Americans send principled representatives to change Washington and get punished in return.

The GOP leadership might think they have silenced conservatives, but removing me and others from key committees only confirms our conservative convictions. This is clearly a vindictive move, and a sure sign that the GOP Establishment cannot handle disagreement.

Huelskamp added that he “is not ashamed” of his staunch conservative stance on the issues.

Amash described Boehner’s action as a “[slap in the face](#)” to the libertarian wing of the Republican Party. “For a party that’s trying to expand its base and make sure it reaches out to young people and new groups, I think it’s pretty outrageous,” Amash said during a speech at the Heritage Foundation on Tuesday.

He added that he has yet to receive official notification from Speaker Boehner of the revocation of his Budget Committee membership.

The exile of Amash and Huelskamp to a libertarian Elba was made Monday during a Steering Committee meeting. According to [sources cited by Roll Call](#), members of the Steering Committee “reviewed a spreadsheet listing each GOP lawmaker and how often he or she had voted with leadership.” Given Amash’s and Huelskamp’s record, it is likely their names ranked at the top of



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Boehner's hit list.

Boehner heads the 34-member Steering Committee that includes members of House leadership, committee chairs, and other lawmakers selected from different regions of the country. After meeting last week, the group recommended Paul Ryan be returned to his seat as Budget Committee chairman.

It is easy to see, then, why Boehner could not allow Huelskamp and Amash to sit on a committee whose chairman they alone had the courage to oppose. Once again, the GOP demonstrates that when it comes to leadership decisions, party is given priority over principle.

Two other conservative lawmakers also received committee assignment pink slips on Tuesday: Representatives David Schweikert (R-Ariz.) and Walter Jones (R-N.C.) were kicked off the Financial Services Committee.

Again, a source told *Roll Call* that Schweikert was removed because his "votes were not in lockstep with leadership." One could argue that lockstep with the leadership by so many Republicans is marching us away from the Constitution and right off the fiscal cliff.

Boehner appears to be purging his party's caucus in advance of negotiations with President Obama over plans to keep from plunging into economic ruin. Congressmen on the right who refuse to demonstrate blind loyalty to Boehner will be sacrificed on the altar of bipartisanship and power consolidation.

One GOP lobbyist told *Roll Call*, "This is a move that the whip team has been advocating for some time. They are using all of the tools at their disposal."

In an attempt to deflect the criticism aimed at his boss, Boehner spokesman Michael Steele told *The New American* that "the Steering Committee makes decisions based on a range of factors."

Judging by Boehner's choice of targets, one of those factors is the failure of conservative Republicans to put loyalty to party above loyalty to their oath of office to "preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States."

Photo of House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio): AP Images

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