



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on February 13, 2014

## Republicans Cave, Give President Unlimited Borrowing Power

Following Tuesday's [passage of a "clean" debt ceiling bill](#) in the House of Representatives, the Senate [approved it on Wednesday](#) and sent it on to the president, who is expected to sign it without delay.

The bill allows the president unlimited borrowing authority until well after the November elections so that Republicans can focus instead on the failings of ObamaCare to leverage their chances in that election. It also neatly kicks the budgeting can into the next Congress for them to deal with. This will be the 79th time the Congress has voted either to extend or raise the debt limit since 1960, 49 of them under Republican presidents while only 30 times under Democratic presidents.

In that single statistic lies the truth behind debt ceiling limits and government spending. Without the assistance of the Republicans, Democrats would be hard-pressed to continue to spend the country into bankruptcy. With Republican aid, that bankruptcy is all but assured.

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There were half-hearted attempts by middle-of-the-roaders to place the blame for the House vote on Democrats. Rep. Dave Camp (R-Mich.), chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, said, "I am disappointed that Democrats have walked away from the table.... As disappointed as I am, I cannot in good conscience let the Democrat's refusal to engage lead to a default." In lockstep with Camp was Rep. Doug LaMalfa (R-Calif.):

It's disappointing but we have an intractable White House. This is a hard deal for us but it's also important that we keep the country operating and the financial markets stable, so this is the thing we have to take until somehow there's a change in attitude in the Senate or the White House or a change of occupancy of the Senate or the White House.

Last fall the *New York Times* called the House's approval of a bill to allow spending to continue without limit "The Republican Surrender." This time the *Times* called it "a public rebuke of the Tea Party wing by Republican Party elders." A closer look at what happened in the Senate on Wednesday is instructive as to exactly how that rebuke took place.

Initially, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid was prepared to accept the House bill without change, call for a vote, pass it, and get out of town. But Tea Party favorite Senator Ted Cruz (R-Texas) called for a cloture vote, forcing out into the open Republicans who wanted the debt ceiling issue to go away without fanfare. This put Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell into a bind, especially when he initially couldn't find enough Republicans to join Democrats for the 60 votes needed to overcome any





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possible filibuster. He could find enough members to reach 59, but he couldn't find 60. For 40 minutes he called on his fellow Republicans to go along, to be loyal to the party, and to put this bickering that was threatening to hinder the operation of the government behind them and get out of town before the snowstorm hit.

At the last minute, McConnell cast the 60th vote himself, ending cloture and clearing the way for the Senate to pass the House bill, which it did, 55-43. But the cloture vote was interesting in that once McConnell cast his vote, seven other Republicans joined him, securing the end of cloture, 67-31. Those voting for cloture were then free to vote against the House bill, knowing that it would easily pass by majority vote and appear to voters as if they had voted against raising the debt ceiling. Just the thing for the rubes back home, this being an election year and all.

Cruz called them out on the ploy:

Let's be clear about the motive behind this vote — there are too many members of Congress who think they can fool people and they will forget about it next week.

But sometimes, come November, the people remember.

For McConnell, his going along to get along might just end his career. Already facing what some are calling the closest Senate race this year, McConnell hardly likely improved his dismal 31-percent approval rating in Kentucky. His Republican primary challenger, Matt Bevin, immediately sent out a statement saying: "Kentucky deserves a senator that will not keep voting to suffocate our children and grandchildren with trillions of dollars in debt." This was followed by a tweet from former Senator Jim DeMint and founder of the Senate Conservatives Fund: "Mitch McConnell just voted with the Democrats to advance yet another debt limit increase. Kentucky deserves better."

Texas Senator John Cornyn was another who switched his vote at the last minute to push the cloture vote over the top, despite being challenged by another Tea Party favorite, Rep. Steve Stockman (R-Texas), for his seat in November. But Cornyn's loyalty to party, over consideration of his constituents, was deemed courage, not surrender, by GOP stalwarts. Senator Bob Corker (R-Tenn.), who also joined McConnell in voting for the end of cloture, said, "I think it showed tremendous courage on his part." Senator John McCain (R-Ariz.) added that McConnell's vote

was a very courageous act, especially by Senator McConnell who we all know is in a very tough race.

He knows he's the leader. He is the elected Republican leader, and it was up to him to cast the right vote.

On the other hand, Tea Partier Senator Cruz noted the disconnect between going along with the party and doing the right thing for the country:

Just about every American understands that we can't keep going the way we're going. We're bankrupting the country. It's irresponsible.

Today was a classic victory for Washington establishment interests, and the people who lost today are the American people....

It should have been an easy vote. In my view, every Senate Republican should have stood together and said what every one of us tells our constituents back home, which is that we will not go along with raising the debt ceiling while doing nothing to address the underlying spending problem.



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But pragmatism overrode principle in the House on Tuesday and in the Senate on Wednesday. Now the Republican party establishment can concentrate on solidifying its hold on the House and perhaps regain a majority in the Senate in November so that they can continue to promote the softer side of socialism that so annoys the Tea Party and others who are concerned about the fiscal health of the country.

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