



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on October 10, 2013

## Tea Party not Caving on Shutdown as Obama Drops Further in Polls

Within days of the government shutdown, pundits [began to estimate](#) just how long the hard-core Tea Party members in the House would maintain their stand against funding ObamaCare. One even listed the names of 18 members who were already “caving in” while noting another four were considering it. None of those, however, are members of the Tea Party Caucus who continue to have sufficient clout to have closed down compromise discussions between House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) and the White House over the government shutdown.



All was quiet on the eastern front until Tuesday when President Obama [let slip the suggestion](#) that he would be willing to accept a short-term measure to fund the government and raise the debt ceiling at the same time, conditioned upon serious negotiations with House Republicans about cutting government spending sometime later.

Members of the Republican Study Committee, numbering some 170, leaped at the chance to begin building a bridge, willing to consider giving the president what he wanted — no limits on continued government spending and no cuts to his healthcare masterpiece — in exchange for the promise of holding talks about those cuts sometime in the future. *Fox News* said it would “by definition be only a stopgap fix” but it “could help buy time for lawmakers to nail down the specifics on a longer-term deal.”

This was the opportunity Rep. Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) was waiting for. As chairman of the House Budget Committee, he trotted out [just what was needed](#): a six-week extension of the debt ceiling coupled with the promise of serious conversations about cutting government spending in the meantime. The ploy was obvious: If Obama refused to cut, the House would refuse to extend the debt limit further.

Wafflers like [Rep. Kevin Brady](#) (R-Texas) jumped on board: “It may make sense to avoid back-to-back financial crises. We may need some extra time to pull the right package together.” Translation: Give the president what he wants now and we’ll talk about the possibility of cutting government spending later. Another waffler, [Rep. Matt Salmon](#) (R-Ariz.), said Ryan’s idea is “provocative ... anything that gets us to a meaningful reduction of spending ... should be on the table.”

Brady and Salmon, however, have shunned joining the Tea Party Caucus (TPC) and therefore only speak for themselves. Rep. [Steve Scalise](#) (R-La.), however, is not only a member of the TPC, but he also chairs the Republican Study Committee and he remains adamant that without significant up-front cuts in spending, including cuts and limits to ObamaCare, nothing is going to happen. Said Scalise:

We’ve always talked about mandatory spending [cuts] being addressed in a debt ceiling increase, but keep in mind that Obamacare is part of mandatory spending.

In the background is the release of the unheralded but embarrassing further declines in the polls that



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the president is suffering. Avoiding putting it into a headline, the *Washington Post* decided to report the latest poll from the *Associated Press* in the eighth paragraph of its report from the AP:

Most Americans disapprove of the way Obama is handling his job, the poll suggests, with 53 percent unhappy with his performance and 37 percent approving it.

Nothing was mentioned that these are the lowest poll numbers for Obama during his administration, or that they are approaching the lows recorded by President George W. Bush [during his darkest days](#).

On Thursday the president invited House Republicans to the White House for a “conversation,” not a “negotiation,” according to the *Wall Street Journal*. All Republicans were invited but, to his credit, Speaker John Boehner recognized the invitation for what it was: a photo-op to show the president “really trying” to work with members of the House over the government shutdown. Boehner whittled the invitation list down to 18.

Writing in the *National Journal*, long-time political analyst Michael Hirsh [spelled out](#) what is going to have to happen for anything substantial to come out of such “conversations”: The president is going to have to budge. According to Hirsh,

Tea partiers may be unpopular in the nation’s media meccas but they are a growing grassroots agglomeration that is going to have a much bigger impact on politics than “Gang of Eight”-style compromisers [read: Paul Ryan], at least for a long time to come.

That’s because they see themselves as fighting for a principle....

The tea partiers are saying now, as they have for three years, that they will no longer tolerate government growth as usual — in this case, the advent of a new program, Obamacare....

The tea partiers are simply not going away ... they will continue to pile on GOP primary challenges that will keep [nominal] Republican incumbents in a state of electoral terror leading up to 2014.

One way or another, Obama’s going to have to blink.

*Photo of President Barack Obama: AP Images*

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