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FACT SHEET

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A “Tick-Tock” of House GOP Obstruction

House GOP Has Been Obstructing Progress for the American People Since Day One

Following is an overview of how, since Day One, in addition to not having a jobs agenda, **the House GOP has manufactured crisis after crisis -- holding hostage and adding poison pills to bills that have historically been bipartisan.** Despite the negative reviews they are receiving, House Republicans are continuing down this path – threatening more debt limit brinkmanship and the middle class tax cuts once again this summer.

February-April 2011: Threatened A Government Shutdown

- Generally, when control of Congress is divided, efforts are made to negotiate government funding bills in a bipartisan way to avoid a government shutdown. But in 2011, House Republicans, particularly freshmen, came in with a plan to use the appropriations process to impose their ideological agenda.
- On February 19, House Republicans passed an extremist version of the funding bill for the remainder of FY 2011. [\[Vote 147\]](#) The bill slashed investments in domestic programs by \$61.5 billion below the FY 2010 level. The bill also included several **poison pills**, designed to provoke a fight with the Senate and the Administration – setting up early on a possible government shutdown. These **poison pills** included:
 - No funding for Title X family planning programs.
 - No funding for Planned Parenthood.
 - No funding to implement the Affordable Care Act.
 - No funding to implement the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform law.
 - Numerous restrictions on the ability of EPA to enforce the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act.
 - Freezing funding for Pell Grants, requiring the maximum grant to be cut by \$845 per student.
 - Slashing the Head Start program by 14 percent.
- From February through April, there were difficult negotiations between House Republicans on the one hand and the Administration and Senate Democrats on the other. Three separate short-term CRs had to be passed over these weeks to keep the government open.
- House Republicans played brinkmanship with a government shutdown – with their resistance to compromise causing the negotiations going up to the eleventh hour, concluding just hours before the government would have shut down. In these negotiations, Republicans were insisting until late in the day that many of their ideological policy riders be included in the final bill.
- Finally, on April 14, the House and Senate passed a final funding bill for FY 2011, with only five and a half months left in the fiscal year. The final negotiations succeeded in getting the poison pills either eliminated or substantially changed.

May-August 2011: Brought the Country to Brink of Default, Causing the First Downgrade in U.S. Credit Rating in Our Nation’s History

- Historically, until now, politics has never threatened the debt ceiling being increased – with the parties working on a bipartisan basis to prevent such an outcome. Congress has been raising the debt ceiling, whenever needed, since 1917 when the limit was enacted. Since 1917, the limit has been raised numerous times under both Republican and Democratic Presidents – never with a crisis, until 2011. Indeed, just since March 1962, the debt limit has been raised 74 times.
- In 2011, for the first time in our nation’s history, the House GOP majority decided to use the leverage of the need to raise the debt ceiling as a way to enact their partisan, ideological agenda. In a historical first, Speaker Boehner placed conditions on raising the debt limit – stating it could only be raised if the legislation included the types of cuts in key investments supported by House Republicans.

- From May through August, Speaker Boehner and Majority Leader Cantor played brinkmanship with the debt ceiling.
- The Administration tried to negotiate a big, bold and balanced deficit reduction deal – but ultimately Republicans scuttled any agreement by saying deficit reduction could include no revenue increases.
- Many Republicans prominent in the House GOP Conference vocally disputed that there were any dangers to default. For example, “Representative Joe Walsh, a freshman from Illinois, ... accused President Obama of ‘lying’ about the dangers of default. ‘There’s plenty of money to pay off our debt and cover all of our Social Security obligations,’ he said... Jim Jordan of Ohio...said he is willing to go down with the cut, cap and balance ship even if default is the only option.” [\[NYT Editorial\]](#)
- At the last minute, on August 1, one day before default would occur, the House passed the Budget Control Act, which raised the debt limit, cut spending by \$1 trillion over 10 years, and established a Joint Deficit Reduction Committee to reduce the deficit by an additional \$1.2 trillion.
- The summer-long GOP brinkmanship on the debt ceiling **“sparked the first-ever downgrade of the U.S. credit rating by Standard & Poor’s, which cited political brinkmanship as the chief cause.”** [\[CNN\]](#)
- Two economics professors at the University of Pennsylvania have concluded that the GOP debt ceiling brinkmanship almost derailed the economic recovery last summer. They point out that job creation nearly came to a halt, consumer confidence plummeted, and economic growth dramatically slowed during the months of GOP brinkmanship. [\[Debt Limit\]](#)

July-August 2011: Held FAA Extension Hostage, Causing A 13-Day Partial Shutdown of the FAA

- In the summer of 2011, playing politics by House Republicans resulted in a 13-day partial shutdown of the Federal Aviation Administration – lasting from July 23 through August 4.
- The 13-day shutdown resulted in the halt of hundreds of airport construction projects throughout the country, leading to the furlough of tens of thousands of construction workers; the furlough of about 4,000 FAA employees, including airline inspectors; and the loss of \$25 million to \$30 million daily in federal excise taxes.
- On July 20, two days before a FAA extension expired, House Republicans provoked the shutdown by passing and sending the Senate a FAA extension that this time included **poison pills, controversial policy provisions that they knew the Senate opposed,** instead of a clean extension. [\[Vote 611\]](#) The provisions curbed subsidies to small and rural airports under the Essential Air Service (EAS) program.
- In taking this step, House Republicans were also trying to increase their leverage on the Senate in the negotiations on the long-term FAA authorization bill, on winning a House GOP anti-union provision that would make it harder for workers at airlines and railroads to unionize.
- Predictably, the Senate refused to pass the House bill. Democrats tried to get UC to pass a clean FAA extension and send it to the House before the shutdown would begin, but a Republican objected.
- Ultimately, with the House GOP digging its heels in and seemingly unconcerned that tens of thousands of construction workers and thousands of FAA employees had been furloughed, the Administration intervened and persuaded the Senate to pass the House bill, with the assurance that Secretary LaHood would use authority the bill gave him in order to waive the EAS subsidy cuts.

September-October 2011: Held Up Disaster Relief

- On September 15, 2011, the Senate passed a strong disaster relief package of \$6.9 billion by a vote of 62 to 37, with bipartisan support, including 10 Senate Republicans. There were no offsets to the disaster relief aid in the Senate bill.
- By sharp contrast, on September 23, the House GOP passed a Continuing Resolution/Disaster Relief Funding bill that included **the poison pill** of insisting on cutting investments to offset certain disaster relief spending. [\[Vote 727\]](#) The bill provided \$3.65 for disaster aid -- \$1 billion for FY 2011 and \$2.65 billion for FY 2012. The bill offset aid for FY 2011 through a \$1.5 billion cut in the Advanced Technology Vehicle Manufacturing Program, costing 10,000 good-paying American jobs. This cut was opposed by both the [Chamber of Commerce](#) and the [National Association of Manufacturers](#).
- As a result of the House GOP including this controversial offset, the final CR/Disaster Relief bill was not completed and sent to the President until after the beginning of the fiscal year. The final version of the bill, passed by the House and sent to the President on October 4, did not include any offsets to the bill’s disaster aid funding.

September 2011-February 2012: Held A Middle Class Payroll Tax Cut Hostage for Months

- In September, as part of his American Jobs Act, President Obama proposed preventing a tax increase on the middle class on January 1, 2012, by extending the middle class payroll tax cut for one more year.
- On October 11, Senate Democrats attempted to bring up the payroll tax cut extension, along with other key elements of the American Jobs Act, but a cloture vote failed due to GOP opposition.
- For months, House Republicans left middle class families uncertain whether their taxes would rise on January 1, refusing to bring a payroll tax cut bill to the Floor. When they finally brought a bill to the Floor and passed it on December 13 [\[Vote 923\]](#), they loaded it up with **poison pills** that they knew would not pass the Senate, including:
 - **Seniors Paying More.** Required millions of seniors to pay substantially more for their health care under Medicare – increasing the costs of these seniors by \$31 billion over 10 years.
 - **Keystone.** Included the GOP provision to short-circuit the normal review process for the Keystone Pipeline project that was mandated by statute.
 - **Cutting Off Unemployment Insurance Benefits.** Cut off unemployment insurance benefits for more than one million Americans who lost their jobs through no fault of their own.
- Days later, on December 17, since time had run out on the legislative session, the Senate passed a two-month extension of the payroll tax cut by a strong, bipartisan vote of 89 to 10 – with the understanding that the House would quickly pass it. The Senate then left town for the holiday.
- On December 20, in a brazen act of irresponsibility, after the Senate had left town, House Republicans refused to pass the Senate-passed two-month extension and instead appointed conferees on the House GOP bill – threatening 160 million Americans with a tax increase on January 1.
- After several days of newspaper editorials that excoriated House Republicans for their irresponsibility, House GOP leaders acquiesced and passed a two-month extension by UC on December 23 that closely mirrored the Senate bill. The Senate cleared the measure the same day by UC – blocking the tax hike.
- After weeks of negotiations and uncertainty for middle class families, the Congress finally enacted the one-year extension of the payroll tax cut on February 22, 2012 – with the GOP poison pills in the original House bill either completely eliminated or substantially modified.

Throughout 2012: Have Blocked the Remainder of the President's American Jobs Act, Which Would Create More Than One Million Jobs

- More than nine months ago, President Obama sent his American Jobs Act to Congress, a detailed jobs plan full of the kind of bipartisan ideas that would have put more Americans back to work. It had broad support from the American people. It was fully paid for.
- While a few pieces (such as the extension of the payroll tax cut) have been enacted, more than nine months later, House Republicans continue to block most of the provisions of the President's jobs plan. Independent economists have estimated that enacting these remaining pieces of the American Jobs Act would create more than one million jobs.
- Some of the key pieces of the American Jobs Act that House Republicans are continuing to block include:
 - **Tax Cuts for Small Businesses.** The American Jobs Act promotes the hiring of new employees by small businesses by eliminating payroll taxes for businesses that increase their payroll by adding new workers or increasing the wages of their current workers. To help small businesses and the economy grow, the American Jobs Act also allows companies to deduct 100% of the cost of capital (“bonus depreciation”) in the first year for new investments in machinery and equipment, instead of depreciating those expenses from their taxes over several years.
 - **Getting Teachers, Police Officers, and Firefighters Back on the Job.** The American Jobs Act helps states and localities put teachers, police officers and firefighters back on the job. State and local governments have laid off more than 600,000 Americans since January 2009 – many of them teachers. This bill would prevent up to 280,000 teacher layoffs, while keeping tens of thousands of cops and firefighters on the job.
 - **Jumpstarting Critical Infrastructure Projects.** In order to jumpstart critical infrastructure projects and create hundreds of thousands of jobs, the American Jobs Act includes funding for immediate investments for highway, transit, rail and aviation projects – which would help the struggling construction industry, with 2.2 million construction and manufacturing workers currently out of work.

March-June 2012: Obstructed and Delayed For Months Legislative Action on A Bipartisan Transportation Bill Creating or Saving Over Two Million Jobs

- Historically in Congress, transportation bills have always been written and passed on a bipartisan basis.
- In that bipartisan tradition, more than three months ago, the Senate passed a responsible, bipartisan two-year transportation bill that will save or create more than two million jobs by a strong, bipartisan vote of 74 to 22, with 22 Republican Senators voting YEA.
- In sharp contrast, the House GOP leadership wasted more than ten weeks trying and failing to bring to the Floor and pass the first partisan transportation bill in more than 50 years. Their “my way or no highway” agenda:
 - Would have killed 550,000 American jobs and cut highway investments in [45 states and D.C.](#)
 - Secretary LaHood noted, “This is the most partisan transportation bill that I have ever seen... It’s the worst transportation bill I’ve ever seen during 35 years of public service.” [\[Politico\]](#)
- Unable to pass a transportation bill, the House GOP Leadership then sent a three-month extension bill, with **a series of poison pills** (including the Keystone provision and anti-environmental riders) to a conference with the Senate-passed bill. [\[Vote 170\]](#)
- The conferees were named back in late April. Due to House GOP intransigence, the conference took almost two months to get its work done. House Republicans spent weeks insisting on attaching provisions that had nothing to do with highways or transit and calling for cuts in highway investments.
 - House Republicans **voted four times against** even taking up the bipartisan Senate-passed transportation bill to send the bill to the President’s desk. [\[Washington Post, 3/21; Vote 118, Vote 130, Vote 146, Vote 165\]](#)
- Democrats are pleased that a final bipartisan job-creating highway conference report, which will create or save more than 2 million jobs, has now finally been successfully passed by the deadline of June 30. However, House Republicans – through their delay and obstruction over the last three months on getting a two-year bill completed – created unnecessary uncertainty and hurt the U.S. economy.

March-June 2012: Caused Unnecessary Uncertainty for Millions of College Students by Obstructing and Delaying Action on Preventing the Doubling of Student Loan Interest Rates for Months

- Congress has known all year that, without legislative action, the interest rates on the student loans of 7.4 million college students would double on July 1 – from 3.4 percent to 6.8 percent.
- On March 21, all of the Republicans on the House Budget Committee voted against an amendment to the GOP budget that would have prevented the doubling of student loan rates. On March 29, House Republicans passed their budget, which allowed for the doubling of the interest rate to proceed.
- In April, Rep. John Kline, Chairman of the Education and the Workforce Committee, expressly opposed blocking the rate increase. “Extending the low rate would be too costly, [Chairman John] Kline said.” [\[New York Times, 4/20/12\]](#)
- Suddenly, in late April, the heat on the issue got too hot, and the House GOP Leadership abruptly reversed their position and said they supported blocking the rate hike.
- However, the House GOP Leadership played political games. In their bill to block the rate hike, they insisted on using **a poison pill** as their offset – a repeal of the Prevention Fund, which would mean that 326,000 women would not get the breast cancer screenings they are slated to receive next year. The GOP bill passed April 27. [\[Vote 195\]](#) The President stated he would veto it if it came to his desk.
- On June 7, Majority Leader Reid proposed two bipartisan offsets, relating to employer pension contributions, which finally led to the negotiations that successfully ended in the final bipartisan deal.
- Democrats are pleased that a bipartisan deal has finally been passed. However, through their delay and obstruction over the last three months, House Republicans caused unnecessary uncertainty for millions of college students who did not know what their loan rate would be for the coming year.

April-June 2012: Have Obstructed the Bipartisan Senate-Passed Violence Against Women Act, Which Passed the Senate by a Vote of 68 to 31

- Until this Republican House, VAWA legislation has always been bipartisan. Indeed, the 2000 VAWA Reauthorization passed the House by a vote of 371 to 1 and the Senate by a vote of 95 to 0; and the 2005 VAWA Reauthorization passed the House by voice vote and the Senate by unanimous consent.

- On April 26, the Senate passed a bipartisan VAWA Reauthorization by a strong, bipartisan vote of 68 to 31, with 15 Republicans voting YEA. Working over several months, Senators had worked on a bipartisan basis, and with all of the stakeholders, to write a bipartisan bill. The bipartisan sponsors responded to the needs reported by those who work with victims every day to make VAWA work better for all victims.
- By sharp contrast, on May 16, House Republicans narrowly passed a highly partisan VAWA bill by a vote of 222 to 205. [\[Vote 258\]](#) Once again, House Republicans insisted on putting **poison pills** in their bill – for the first time in VAWA history, putting forward a bill that rolled back, rather than strengthened, protections for women. Specifically, the bill rolls back certain long-standing VAWA protections to promote the safety of battered immigrant victims.
- More than 300 organizations oppose the partisan House GOP bill, including the American Bar Association, YWCA, Conference of Mayors, United Methodist Church, United Church of Christ, National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, AAUW, and Business and Professional Women.
- The [National Association of Evangelicals](#) also oppose the House GOP bill’s immigrant provisions, writing, “Among the most vulnerable are those women whose immigration status depends upon the cooperation of an abuser. ... [The bill] rolls back important existing protections under U.S. law.”

May-June 2012: Have Obstructed Certainty for Middle Class Americans, Holding Middle Class Tax Cuts Hostage to Tax Breaks for Millionaires

- Democrats and Republicans agree that taxes should not be hiked on America’s middle class. So why wait to provide American families and small businesses certainty?
- House Democrats have called upon Speaker Boehner to bring an extension of the middle-income tax cuts to the House Floor immediately – and use the revenues from the expiring tax breaks for those earning more than a million dollars a year to pay down the debt. This will:
 - Provide relief for middle-income American families struggling to make ends meet;
 - Strengthen our economy by bringing certainty to families who will spend money and inject demand into the economy and into America’s small businesses; and
 - Reduce the deficit.
- But House Republicans have a different plan. They are planning to hold the middle class tax cuts hostage to tax breaks for millionaires. They have stated that the only tax cut bill that will come up during the rest of this year is a bill that ties in one package extending the tax cuts for middle class families with extending the tax cuts for millionaires and billionaires.
- The American public agrees with Democrats. A recent [United Technologies/National Journal poll](#) showed that only 26 percent of Americans support extending the Bush tax cuts for the wealthiest few.
- The cost of the tax cuts for the top 1% since 2001 has been \$752 billion. Extending all of the Bush tax cuts will give millionaire households an average tax cut of almost \$75,000 in 2013. Furthermore, economists say that these tax cuts for the richest Americans do little to create jobs, with the Congressional Budget Office showing them as least effective in stimulating the economy. [\[CBPP\]](#)

May-June 2012: Unbelievably, Speaker Boehner Has Once Again Put the Economy At Risk, Launching Another Round of Debt Limit Brinkmanship

- On May 15, 2012, Speaker Boehner gave a speech where he launched a new round of debt limit brinkmanship, making the same demands he made in May 2011 – after last summer’s GOP debt limit brinkmanship led to the first downgrading of our credit rating and slowed growth. A debt limit increase will be needed at the end of 2012 or the beginning of 2013. [\[Debt Limit\]](#)
- Many have pointed out the Speaker’s irresponsibility. Norm Ornstein has pointed out, “There is the new threat to America’s credit rating raised by Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio), **a sign of recklessness that is beyond disturbing**. ... We no longer have an adult Speaker but a petulant one, apparently deciding that the way to lead his forces is to lead them in irresponsibility. **The U.S. credit rating, credibility and economic health are going to be held hostage.**” [\[Ornstein, 5/23/12\]](#)
- Budget expert Stan Collender writes, “ [Given the credit downgrade from last summer’s crisis], that’s why ... Speaker Boehner’s (R-Ohio) choreographed events last week in which he repeatedly said he would prevent the debt ceiling increase that will be needed at the end of 2012 or the start of 2013 from happening unless he got what he wanted – **was so exceptionally irresponsible.**” [\[Collender, 5/22/12\]](#)