



## House Likely To Pass Budget Agreement

*GOP aides expect majority of Republicans to support it*

By: Alex Rogers – December 12, 2013

The budget deal hashed out by congressional negotiators will pass the House on Thursday with the majority of Republicans supporting it, according to GOP leadership aides, although House Democrats have threatened a revolt over unemployment benefits.

Despite raising the level of discretionary spending over the next two years and replacing \$63 billion in scheduled automatic cuts from the so-called sequester, House Republicans are largely supportive of the agreement reached by Rep. Paul Ryan (R-Wisc.) and Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.). It protects military spending, allows Congress to return to the regular congressional appropriations process, and reduces the deficit by roughly \$85 billion over 10 years without raising taxes. There is also, of course, a political imperative.

“You can’t spend your time making perfect the enemy of the good,” said Rep. Tom Cole (R-Okla.), a member of the budget conference that advised Murray and Ryan during the negotiations. “We got a pretty good lesson what happens if you overplay your hand in those situations in October,” added Cole, referring to the 16-day partial government shutdown that tanked his party’s approval ratings.

When asked why Republicans would change their tactic of extracting concessions from short-term funding deadlines, Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) said simply, “Because people are sick of it.”

McCain and Cole, who support the Ryan-Murray agreement, find themselves at loggerheads with hardline conservatives and their allies at groups like Heritage Action, FreedomWorks and the CATO Institute, which announced their disapproval of the plan even before it was publicly unveiled. The Republican Study Committee, a group of House Republicans that guides the conservative agenda, fired executive director Paul Teller for leaking private conversations.

“They’re using our members and they’re using the American people for their own goals,” House Speaker John Boehner said of the outside political groups at a news conference Wednesday. “This is ridiculous.”

“Listen, if you are for more deficit reduction, you are for this agreement,” he added.

It was a rare public rebuttal by the House GOP leadership, coming after the government shutdown strategy supported by many conservative organizations backfired. To the consternation of those groups, Boehner and House Majority Leader Eric Cantor support the Ryan-Murray plan, knowing full well that Ryan’s star as a conservative wunderkind still shines brightly nearly 15 years after assuming office. Rep. Phil Gingrey (R-Ga.), who earns a 90 percent on Heritage Action’s scorecard and is “leaning no” on

tomorrow's vote, said Ryan is "one of everybody's favorite" Republicans and a "good conservative." If the House passes the budget agreement, Ryan's ability to persuade fellow Republicans will play a major role, especially as House Democrats remain upset that the deal doesn't include extending unemployment insurance. On Dec. 28, 1.3 million Americans will lose their federal unemployment insurance, and an additional 1.9 million Americans eligible for the aid could lose access to that coverage in the first half of 2014.

Some House Democrats feel as though they are alone in the unemployment fight, despite the pleas of President Barack Obama, who spent last week's address urging Congress to pass an extension of jobless benefits. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid has said that he'll push for the extension when the Senate convenes after the New Year. Rep. Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.), the ranking member of the House Budget Committee, said the fight over unemployment insurance could "put at risk" the budget agreement, and Rep. Sandy Levin (D-Mich.), the ranking member on the House Ways and Means Committee, said the matter could change his vote, according to the *Hill*. On Wednesday, 166 House Democrats signed on to a letter asking Boehner to not adjourn Friday unless the unemployment insurance issue is resolved. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that the proposal would cost nearly \$26 billion over the next two years.

Rep. Robert Andrews (D-N.J.) believes Reid and Obama's efforts haven't been enough. "I don't know why the White House and the Senate have not been more aggressive on this," said Andrews. "There's not great joy about that."