



Conservative Lawmakers Fight the Swamp

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It's typical Washington, D.C., to want to pass a \$19 billion bill without even giving lawmakers a chance to weigh in.

But thanks to the effort of Republican Reps. Chip Roy and Thomas Massie, the swamp hit a speed bump.

On Friday and again on Tuesday, there was an effort to pass a \$19 billion disaster aid package in the House—despite the fact that the House was on recess.

This would seem to be an important matter for the House to hash out in open debate before sending to the president's desk. After all, the Founding Fathers intentionally put the purse strings in the hands of the House, a body closest to the interests of the people.

The liberal Left continue to push their radical agenda against American values. The good news is there is a solution. [Find out more >>](#)

The average American household pays about \$26,000 in taxes to the federal government a year. That \$19 billion is roughly equal to the annual federal taxes of 730,000 households—hardly a trivial amount of money.

But instead of having a robust debate, the bill was rushed through in the metaphorical dead of night. Rachel Bovard, the policy director of the Conservative Partnership Institute, [explained in the Washington Examiner](#) how this all went down. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif. brought the bill to the floor after sending legislators home for vacation on Thursday.

Enter Roy.

“What [Pelosi] wasn't counting on, however, was that one member wanted to actually read the bill—the final text of which had only come over from the Senate hours earlier,” Bovard wrote. “Not only that, but horror of horrors, he wanted to debate and vote on it.”

“Roy [objected](#) to passing the bill by unanimous consent, asserting his right to request that the House of Representatives debate and vote on the measure with all members present,” Bovard continued.

Roy [explained](#) in a CNN interview that he believes disaster relief for places like Puerto Rico, Texas, and Georgia should be debated, as should border security—especially in light of President Donald Trump's request for additional border wall funding.

“I objected because I didn't think that the people's House should be subjected to unanimous consent when everyone is out of town, and instead we should vote,” Roy said.

Unsurprisingly, pundits and politicians immediately lashed out at Roy and anyone who might object to the particulars of the bill.

Others, like Massie and Rep. Alex Mooney, R-W.Va., have now joined in criticizing the way this bill was brought up as well. On Tuesday, Massie, Mooney by his side, prevented the bill from being passed, saying, “If the speaker of this House felt that this was must-pass legislation, the speaker of this House should have called a vote on this legislation before sending its members on recess for 10 days.”

Tucking needless pork into emergency relief bills is the kind of swampy behavior that rarely gets punished in Washington, but now that a congressman wants to do his job and make sure the people’s money isn’t being wasted, he’s being attacked over it.

NPR reported on the disaster relief provisions of the bill:

The bill includes specific provisions to speed money to communities recovering from tornadoes, hurricanes, drought, volcanoes and other natural disasters. It earmarks \$3 billion for farms, places that were hit by flooding in the South and Midwest; nearly \$800 million for the Army Corps of Engineers for rebuilding and investigations; and more than \$500 million for the Coast Guard.

The bill also includes \$600 million in nutrition assistance for Puerto Rico and about \$300 million for Community Development Block Grants for U.S. territory.

However, some of the Republican senators who voted against the legislation attacked it for pairing wasteful spending with disaster relief.

“If legislators in Washington actually read this \$19.1 billion spending bill, maybe they would share my concern with spending taxpayer funds on pet projects—like provisions for cherry farmers who make over \$900,000 a year—instead of dealing with real problems like relief for victims of natural disasters or the humanitarian crisis on our southern border,” said Sen. Mike Braun, R-Ind., in a statement.

Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, derided the bill for being “loaded up with billions of dollars in unrelated pet projects” in a statement.

There are certainly reasons to think that much of this bill is egregious waste rather than necessary relief, and the included funding for the Community Development Block Grant is of particular concern.

Vanessa Brown Calder, formerly a policy analyst at the Cato Institute, highlighted in March just a few of the dubious spending projects of the program in recent years, including \$375,000 for a burrito restaurant in New York and \$276,000 for a skateboard park in Massachusetts.

Furthermore, was all the spending in this package truly for emergencies that occurred because of disasters? Romina Boccia, director of The Heritage Foundation’s Grover M. Hermann Center for the Federal Budget, told The Daily Signal in an email:

Congress is yet again using the guise of disaster relief as an excuse to engage in more deficit spending.

Supplemental appropriations should be reserved for truly unforeseen events that have a large scale impact on the country, not for recurring problems such as seasonal flooding and wildfires.

Congress should strictly adhere to a 1991 Office of Management and Budget definition of what qualifies for emergency spending: necessary; sudden; urgent; unforeseen; and not permanent. This disaster package does not meet these criteria.

Jessica Anderson, vice president of Heritage Action for America, said in a statement to The Daily Signal: “Congress should not be taking shortcuts and cutting out debate on a bill that would increase spending by \$19.1 billion with zero offsets. The American people have a right to know where their elected representatives stand on these important issues, and representatives should go on record with their votes.”

There are many reasons why America is now saddled with more debt than any time in its history, but casual wasting of money and endless borrowing has certainly been a contributing factor. We should be more careful with how our hard-earned tax money is spent or try to understand why in this instance we need to borrow against our future.

Continually pushing legislation through with seemingly little input for our representatives makes a mockery of our republican system, as common as this sort of practice has become.

It also adds to the reputation of Congress as a rubber-stamp body, overshadowed by the power of the presidency, and overruled by the mandates of our vast federal bureaucracy.

This shouldn't be the case, and certainly doesn't reflect the institution the Founding Fathers created to be the most powerful branch of the federal government.

Perhaps yet another opaque spending bill passed without debate won't make or break the republic, but what does it say of us that we continue to allow this to happen unchecked?

It's not grandstanding for legislators to halt the spending of billions of dollars to come to a better understanding of what such vast sums of money are actually being used for—and whether they would be better spent elsewhere.

Frankly, that's their job.

What we should be lamenting is a dereliction of duty; duty to the people to make sure their money is well spent.