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The Arena

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Driving the Conversation:

Arena Ref: [David Mark](#)

Will congressional dysfunction boost Obama?

Roger Pilon Vice President for Legal Affairs, Cato Institute :

Congressional dysfunction will boost Obama's reelection chances only if Republicans fail to frame the issue accurately.

There's no do-nothing Congress, only a do-nothing Senate. After the 2010 mid-term elections the new Republican House passed numerous measures aimed at addressing our deficits and debt - none terribly far-reaching, unfortunately - but they've all died in Harry Reid's do-nothing Democratic Senate, which has shown itself incapable of cutting anything.

That means, understandably, that we're in a holding pattern until next year. As we're seeing with the extension of the payroll tax holiday, House Republicans are no longer willing to pass responsible rollbacks of government - however parsimonious - only to be demagogued by the president and his party. That game is over. The only questions, as we roll toward November, are whether Republicans can frame the issue for what it is - don't hold your breath - and whether enough voters will see through the other side's demagoguery to elect a president and a Congress that will begin to seriously address the out-of-control government we have today. That was done in many of the states in our last elections. It can be done at the national level too, but only with the right messages.