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The Most Important Senate Vote of 2011

Posted by: **Hugh Hewitt** at 9:51 AM

Harry Reid has announced that he will allow a vote on Paul Ryan's budget as it passed the House. Of course Reid could change his mind when he realizes that at least a half dozen of his own members will want to avoid such a vote because the country favors serious reform of Medicaid and Medicare as well as strict spending caps, but for now the junketing Majority Leader --wandering through China as that state jails Christians by the bus loads-- has put his finger in the wind and concluded that the Ryan plan isn't playing well. Wait until Reid finds out that the economy is slowing under the weight of the president's many initiatives and the weakening dollar and consumer confidence. Jobless claims rose again as well as the Obama effect continues to blanket the economy is doom and gloom. The promise of massive tax hikes and vast deficits isn't lighting a lot of economic fires.

Reid and his political team have calculated that a vote on the Ryan plan puts center-right Senate Republican like Susan Collins and Scott Brown in a tough spot, but not really. The Ryan budget is a proposal to throw on the brakes before we go over the fiscal cliff. It impacts no seniors and indeed no one 55 or older. It is an outline, not a detailed plan, and voting against it will put every opponent in the camp that the Tea Party as well as average citizens will instantly recognize as fiscally irresponsible beyond measure.

By contrast, to vote against the House budget is to stand resolutely by the health-care-destroying Obamacare rollout, full of its waivers and its massive Medicare cuts, and in favor of massive tax hikes across the board, tax hikes that won't stop the deficits from piling up and the dollar from decaying.

Reid has thus promised one true test of every senator's understanding and commitment to reform. Will Tester in Montana, and Brown in Ohio and Nelson in Florida really vote against it and try to tell their citizens that all is well with medicare and that the answer is more taxes? Will Ben Nelson in Nebraska vote against fiscal restraint? Reid has promised a display of great clarity that everyone can watch and record. Indeed, the Gang of Six should stand down until this vote is taken, and any senator who votes against the Ryan budget should go to the top of the Tea Party list for defeat in 2012.

Democratic operatives continue to believe they can spin the hard facts of the nation's fiscal crisis, but they can't. Everybody knows the dismal score. The GOP isn't going to back off the Ryan plan any more than Scott Walker backed off his plan in Wisconsin or John Kasich in Ohio. It is a time for choosing, and the reckless spenders on Reid's side of the aisle will already be urging their boss to change his mind. Voting against fiscal restrain in 2011 is like a British MP voting against airplane production in 1936. It will not be forgotten.

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