

The Street

President Obama, Please Don't Try to Lead Us

By Gary Weiss 11/22/11

NEW YORK ([TheStreet](#)) -- I vividly remember the last cover story of the doomed magazine Conde Nast Portfolio, and not just because I wrote it. On the cover was Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner and the words "Lead Us."

Today, if I had to design a magazine cover, it would show President Obama, House Speaker John Boehner and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, this time with three words:

"Don't Lead Us."

That's right, guys, go home. Take a long sabbatical. The same goes double for the so-called Super Committee that was supposed to rescue us from the bankruptcy that our military adventures and don't-tax-the-rich [policies](#) have obtained for us. Congratulations on a terrific job. You've done your duty to the nation. You can go away now.

I'm not being at all sarcastic. You see, what's apparently about to happen is the best possible outcome of a bad process. The can is about to be kicked down the road. It's risky, but it may work. Cans being kicked down road have been used as a pejorative everywhere from the White House to the libertarian Cato Institute, but it's actually the only sane way to get America out of the mess to which it was put by the hard-right Republican Congress during the summer's brinkmanship.

There was never any possibility of compromise, only capitulation by the Democrats. I was surprised that the final meeting of the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction wasn't scheduled for the deck of the USS Missouri.

What we're witnessing is not just another Congressional failure, but a historic moment that is unique in being simultaneously horrifying, cynical and comical. In a sense, the

2008 financial crisis is being replayed. We're in the fourth month of the 2011 Government Crisis, except that this time failure is not only an option, but is actually the only sensible outcome. In retrospect, the Democrats actually seem to have outwitted the Republicans this time. Automatic cuts are supposed to take place in 2013, with the heaviest slice coming out of the bloated Defense Department budget. Medicaid, Social Security, antipoverty programs and veterans benefits would be untouched, with only modest cuts coming out of Medicare.