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Nancy Pelosi Invites Bruce Bartlett, Prominent Debt Limit Critic, To Testify Before Congress



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WASHINGTON -- One of the most outspoken critics of the debt ceiling's constitutionality will be getting a high-profile place to air his views on Thursday, as he appears at a [hearing](#) of the House Democratic Steering and Policy Committee.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) [announced](#) on Wednesday the inclusion of Bruce Bartlett, who has served as an adviser to numerous Republican officials, an indication that Democrats are increasingly looking into whether the debt ceiling itself is [unconstitutional under the 14th Amendment](#).

Bartlett has drawn attention for writing [multiple articles](#) that suggest President Obama has the constitutional authority to disregard the debt limit in order to prevent a default.

In an April article for the *Fiscal Times*, Bartlett [wrote](#):

The president would be justified in taking extreme actions to protect against a debt default. In the event that congressional irresponsibility makes default impossible to avoid, he should order the secretary of the Treasury to simply disregard the debt limit and sell whatever securities are necessary to raise cash to pay the nation's debts. They are protected by the full faith and credit of the United States and preventing default is no less justified than using American military power to protect against an armed invasion without a congressional declaration of war.

Furthermore, it's worth remembering that the debt limit is statutory law, which is trumped by the Constitution which has a little known provision that relates to this issue. Section 4 of the 14th Amendment says, "The validity of the public debt of the United States...shall not be questioned." This could easily justify the sort of extraordinary presidential action to avoid default that I am suggesting.

Bartlett served as an adviser in the administrations of Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush. He also worked for politicians such as Rep. Ron Paul (R-Texas), former Rep. Jack Kemp (R-N.Y.), and former Sen. Roger Jepsen (R-Iowa), in addition to stints at prominent conservative think tanks The Cato Institute and The Heritage Foundation.

Bartlett, however, drew the ire of his party during the tenure of George W. Bush, when he was a vocal critic of the president. Bartlett wrote in his 2006 book, "Impostor: How George W. Bush Bankrupted America and Betrayed the Reagan Legacy," that the younger Bush had pursued policies that strayed away from the proven conservative policies of previous administrations and damaged the economy as a result.

A person familiar with the hearing said that while Bartlett will be permitted to discuss the 14th Amendment and its implications in his written testimony and in response to questions he may receive from committee members, he has explicitly been asked to not talk about the subject in his oral testimony.

In Wednesday's Twitter Town Hall, [Obama was asked about the constitutionality](#) of the debt limit. While he did not rule out invoking the 14th Amendment, he instead insisted that the situation should not get to a place where such drastic measures would be needed.