



## Tea Party the ultimate winner in debt deal

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The debt deal President Obama signed into law Tuesday was shaped largely by the Tea Party movement, which propelled dozens of fresh faces into Congress last year only after the candidates pledged to drastically slash federal spending.

While many Tea Party freshmen in the House and Senate ended up voting against the debt ceiling bill because they didn't think it cut deep enough, their fingerprints were all over the measure.

There were historically steep cuts, no tax increases and a commitment to even bigger spending reductions in the near future. In response to Tea Party pressure, the measure also requires the House and Senate to vote on a balanced budget amendment, something that hasn't happened in 15 years.

"The Tea Party had a huge influence on the debate," said Chris Edwards, director of tax policy studies at the Cato Institute, a conservative think tank.

Just six months ago, Edwards said, Democrats were proposing new stimulus spending, not reductions. Then the debate on the debt ceiling started, and the sizable pack of new House members sent a clear message to Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, that they wouldn't vote to raise the nation's \$14.3 trillion borrowing limit unless spending was slashed.

"If the new crowd of 87 House freshmen hadn't come to town, we wouldn't be cutting spending at all this year," Edwards said.

The final bill calls for an initial \$1 trillion in cuts, with a bipartisan congressional panel tasked with finding a second round of reductions worth up to \$1.5 trillion. If Congress fails to pass the second round of cuts, \$1.2 trillion will be taken automatically from both defense and nondefense spending.

The bill includes no new revenue, even though Obama and Boehner were just two weeks ago discussing a plan that would have brought in \$800 billion in new taxes over 10 years. Many say the absence of tax increases is the Tea Party's biggest contribution to the bill.

"I think we played a major role," Rep. Jeff Denham, a GOP freshman from California who won his seat with Tea Party support, told The Washington Examiner. "There are 87 of us that stick very close together and we are all working on changing the way this city is run and changing the way our nation is run."



Sen. Jim DeMint, R-S.C., who calls himself Sen. Tea Party, was among the winners after Tuesday's debt deal. The deal President Obama signed into law was shaped largely by the Tea Party movement.

The Tea Party-backed lawmakers resisted demands from their GOP leaders to support earlier versions of the bill and they forced Boehner to rewrite his own proposal -- with additional cuts and a vote on a balanced budget amendment -- before they would vote for it.

Boehner's rewritten bill passed only in the House, but it shaped the final outcome of the legislation, which passed the Senate 74-26 Tuesday and the House 269-161 on Monday.

Still, the final deal did not cut spending enough to please national Tea Party groups, and 27 freshmen voted against the bill along with 39 other Republicans who also heeded the Tea Party line.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., congratulated the Tea Party just before the Senate passed the bill Tuesday.

"The American people sent a wave of new lawmakers to Congress in last November's election with a very clear mandate to put our nation's fiscal house in order," McConnell said. "And I want to assure you today that although you may not see it this way, you've won this debate."

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