



Boehner's Budget Betrayal Will Haunt Republicans

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In one of his final acts before leaving Congress, now-former House Speaker John Boehner teamed up with President Obama for one last embrace. This unholy union concocted a scheme to bust the spending caps, while virtually eliminating the debt ceiling for the final 15 months of Obama's term in office.

While Boehner and Obama pushing progressive legislation is not uncommon for this dastardly duo, this budget deal flies in the face of conservative principles because it wipes away the one real victory House Republicans managed to score since taking back control of the lower chamber in January 2011.

This budget is an utter disgrace and a complete betrayal of the grass-roots conservative activists who worked so hard to defeat Nancy Pelosi and the Democrats during the 2010 elections.

In 2011, Congress passed the Budget Control Act, which mandated automatic across-the-board cuts in projected spending increases over 10 years — known as “sequestration” — in exchange for a debt-ceiling hike. This law created annual discretionary spending caps and would have saved \$1.2 trillion.

Budget deficits had exceeded \$1 trillion in consecutive years, a combination of the recession and Obama's dramatic spending-increases bill, and House Republicans saw an opportunity to leverage a debt-ceiling increase for spending restraint.

The Budget Control Act worked. “Sequestration may have been a blunt instrument, but it has been one of the few successful restraints on federal spending in recent years,” writes the Cato Institute's Michael Tanner. “Without it and the caps in the Budget Control Act, federal spending would have been at least \$200 billion higher since 2011.”

But less than two years after the passage of this historic achievement, Republicans — led by Boehner — began retreating on the spending caps. As Byron York explained at the time, the Ohio lawmaker “adopt[ed] the Democratic description of the cuts as ‘deep’ when they would touch such a relatively small part of federal spending.”

Boehner finally got some of what he wanted in the 2013 budget deal, which blew through the spending caps by trading spending increases for promised cuts down the road. Of course,

conservatives realize that Washington never delivers on these promises, and Americans are left with more debt.

The Obama-Boehner budget is an even worse sellout. This latest deal busts through the spending caps to the tune of \$80 billion, not including the \$16 billion in off-budget spending, and gives Obama a blank check to increase the national debt. The spending offsets in the deal are little more than budgetary gimmicks.

Republicans who backed this deal are monumentally tone-deaf. The grass roots are desperate for leaders who are going to listen to their concerns about the growth of the federal government and who will shake up the status quo in Washington. The anger and frustration over this budget deal — the secrecy and process by which it was hammered out, as well as the betrayal of conservative principles that it represents — could come back to haunt the party's elite.

It's a situation similar to President George H.W. Bush's "no new taxes" pledge at the 1988 Republican National Convention. Bush failed to follow through on this promise, which helped an insurgent independent candidate, Ross Perot, gain conservative support four years later. The failure to stick to conservative principles cost Bush the 1992 election.

The likely beneficiaries of the backlash against this budget deal are Republican candidates who the party's establishment loathes, such as Ben Carson and Donald Trump. The Republican elites are still scratching their heads, wondering how it is possible that these two men have been able to capture such a significant share of the base.

The Obama-Boehner budget is a perfect example of what is driving the grass roots into their arms.

Viewed as straight shooters and outsiders, Carson and Trump have tapped into this anger and frustration among the grass roots as accented in the polls in early primary and caucus states. This budget deal only adds fuel to the fire.

Whether it was the shifting dynamics of the party's base or some other cause, Boehner and House Republican leaders got scared, and they went back to what they know: Ramming bad deals that sell out taxpayers through Congress.

The silver lining is that the only way Boehner — whose legacy will be his poor leadership and empty promises — could get this was to resign, but that hardly compares to this budget disaster.