



COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

DAVID R. OBEY, CHAIRMAN

Tuesday, December 21, 2010

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OBEY STATEMENT ON CONTINUING RESOLUTION

WASHINGTON – Congressman Dave Obey (D-WI), Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, made the following statement on the House Floor during debate on Continuing Resolution to fund government operations at the FY2010 level through March 4, 2011:

“Madam Speaker,

John Wesley said that his rule for living was this: do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.

I wish I could say that this legislation lived up to that lofty goal. It does not. It has many, many shortcomings.

The only reason for supporting this legislation today -- and it is an overriding one -- is to keep the government operating. If I were to vote my preferences, I would vote “no” because I believe we should have before us today a continuing resolution for the rest of the fiscal year. The only reason we do not is because only in the United States Senate can you get a majority of votes for any proposition and still lose because of their peculiar rules.

I think the difference between the way our two respective parties have handled similar situations is interesting. Four years ago, when our party took control after 12 years of rule by our friends on the other side of the aisle, the outgoing Republican majority chose to simply dump most of the work for that fiscal year onto the incoming Democratic majority by passing a short-term CR. That meant that we had to spend the first two months dealing with the previous year's business rather than being able to start with a clean slate in dealing with new problems.

In contrast, today's outgoing Democratic majority has tried mightily to clear the deck for the incoming Republican majority by producing a full-year CR, which attempts to compromise by producing funding levels that were \$46 billion below the President's budget and which amounted to a freeze at the previous year's level. Passage of that legislation would have meant that the incoming Republican majority would be able to start with a clean slate in working with the President on a whole host of major problems.

But, instead, we are here today confronted with this legislation, which expires on March 4 and which will require the incoming Republican majority to spend the first two months of its stewardship dealing with last year's business. I think that's unfortunate.

Through the use of the Senate filibuster, it has been assured that we could not complete a full-year CR. That action simply mirrors the procedural resistance with which we have been faced all year long with the Senate minority engaging in more than 87 filibuster actions in order to grind matters to a halt and frustrate the Congress' ability to do anything on the budget front by majority vote.

That is unfortunate; but at this late date, there is no point in arguing. The die is cast, obviously. The only responsible choice at this point is to recognize reality, even though that means that the early days of the next Congress will be unnecessarily confrontational and partisan. It means that, on budget issues, most of next year will simply be about demonstrating political leverage rather than working through honest, substantive differences to reasonable conclusions. Because of that, I most reluctantly, but firmly, suggest an “aye” vote.

So, with that, I would simply say good-bye to you-all, and I would hope that we would cast a responsible vote so that we can get about the country's business next year, even though many of us will not be here to participate.

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