



Snooker – Democrats’ Favorite Pastime

by *Richard W. Rahn*

GOP SHOULD RESIST BECOMING AN EASY MARK AGAIN

Despite pledges to cut spending by the new Republican House majority, it appears spending during the current fiscal year, which ends on Sept. 30, will actually be greater than in fiscal 2011. The House Republicans were filled with good intentions, but they got snookered by President Obama and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid. Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me.

The Tea Party crowd and other Americans who believe in fiscal responsibility are unlikely to be tolerant of and re-elect Republicans who are so incompetent that they cannot reduce federal spending and continue to fund programs that most of their voters oppose. The Constitution is clear. Article I, Section 9 states, “No Money shall be drawn from the Treasury but in Consequence of Appropriations made by Law.” That is, only Congress can authorize the spending of money.

It is true that the Republicans only control one half of Congress, the House, and that many of the Senate Democrats want higher spending, so the House Republicans are not going to be able to get all of the spending reductions they wish. But it also is true that the House Republicans can insist on reductions in overall spending and, particularly, get rid of unpopular and nonessential programs as a price for passing any of the necessary appropriations bills.

The Republicans allowed themselves to get snookered last year by not insisting on the “regular order,” whereby both the House and Senate are required to pass a budget resolution that sets the framework for overall spending. The various appropriations committees then are supposed to make their spending decisions within the limits set by the budget resolution. The House dutifully complied with the Budget Act and passed a budget resolution. The Senate did not - in fact, it has been three years since the Democrat-controlled Senate passed a budget resolution. Without a binding budget resolution signed onto by both houses of Congress, the appropriators basically had free rein, which is exactly what the majority of Democrats wanted.

The president and many of the Democrats demonstrate time and time again that they care little about the rules or the Constitution. Just last week, Mr. Obama made clearly unconstitutional “recess” appointments even though the Senate was not in recess. As former Attorney General Ed Meese and Todd Gaziano of the Heritage Foundation wrote: “If Congress does not resist, the injury is not just to its branch but ultimately to the people. James Madison made clear that the separation of powers was not to protect government officials’ power for their sake, but as a vital check on behalf of individual liberty. To prevent future tyrannical usurpations of power, Congress must act to redress this serious threat to our liberty.”

Again, Congress still has control of the purse, and even the big-spending senators cannot force an appropriation if the House majority does not approve it. Therefore, the Republican leaders must make it clear to the president, Democrats in the Senate and the American people that they will not approve any spending for programs or people that operate against the best interest of America or operate outside what is constitutionally permissible.

Republicans should prepare a specific list of spending non-starters and make it known to all. They need to be clear that if any of the items are contained in a future appropriations bill or continuing resolution, they will make sure it is defeated. The list should contain only those items that would cause the president to have a politically impossible public-relations problem if he threatened to veto the specific appropriation bill or continuing resolution and thereby shut down the government if the items were not included.

Republicans could start by insisting that no expenditure for salaries could be made for people not properly appointed with the advice and consent of the Senate as called for in the

Constitution - that is, phony, non-recess appointments would not be funded.

A number of the international organizations for which the United States provides major support have gone rogue and spent monies on programs of which most fiscally responsible Americans disapprove (or would disapprove if they knew about them). These programs should be cut. Examples are the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (which ignores much sound science), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development’s Fiscal Affairs Committee (which is attempting to create a high tax cartel) and possibly the International Monetary Fund, which keeps flirting with bailing out European economic mismanagement.

The GOP and others have rightly complained about regulatory excess, but they need to put some teeth in these complaints by refusing to allow funding for regulations that have not been justified by a truly independent cost-benefit analysis, so the Environmental Protection Agency could not get away with unnecessarily attempting to shut down many needed power plants. The cost-benefit requirement also should be applied to the Internal Revenue Service and Treasury so they could not continue such outrages as making it almost impossible for Americans living abroad to get bank accounts and driving hundreds of billions of dollars of foreign capital out of the United States.

Republicans may not be able to reduce spending greatly until they have control of both houses of Congress, but they can stop specific spending programs that have little or no popular support and do great damage. They need to insist on the regular order and provide their list of non-starters now and not wait until the next budget crisis when, once again, they are likely to get snookered.

Richard W. Rahn is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute and chairman of the Institute for Global Economic Growth.

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