

The GOP Should Call Obama's Bluff

Yesterday, spineless Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) came up with a convoluted scheme in which Obama would be allowed to keep borrowing beyond August 2, in three \$800 billion increments. The increases in the debt limit would automatically take effect unless both house of Congress vote *by a two-thirds vote* to block the increase. The plan would require Obama to submit a list of proposed spending cuts, but Congress would debate those spending cuts and not be bound by them. Essentially, McConnell suggested allowing for debt ceiling increases to be automatic, giving Obama more money to spend while virtually insuring that any spending cuts would be meaningless. Based on his ludicrous plan, McConnell should expect outraged conservatives calling for him to be tarred and feathered. (Today that almost happened.)

McConnell blinked when Obama used the “scare the senior citizens” tactic of warning that their Social Security benefits would be in jeopardy if there was not quick action to raise the debt ceiling. Rather than label Obama the shameless demagogue that he is, McConnell decided that being on the right side of the issue was no match for a Keith Olbermann tirade, and he volunteered to give Obama what he wants: the power of an emperor.

Luckily, all the conservative Republicans—and even most of the “Republicans in Name Only”—abandoned McConnell as quickly as Michelle Obama scarfs down burgers and fries when she is out of media camera range.

While conservatives were justifiably outraged by McConnell's cowardly proposal, Democrats are angry that Obama would even put entitlement spending on the negotiating table—because it lessens their ability to attack Republicans. One unnamed Democrat source argued, “We shouldn't be giving away our advantage on Medicare. We should be very careful about giving away the biggest advantage we've had as Democrats in some time. For the first time in the past two and a half years we have an unmitigated advantage on a single issue where our entire caucus is united. This is a case where the whole morale of our party was lifted by the fact that we were taking the fight to Republicans.” In other words, the Democrat campaign for 2012 will largely consist of accusing Republicans of supporting tax cuts for the wealthy and paying for them with Medicare cuts and by throwing elderly grandmothers over cliffs, but those attacks will lose their effectiveness if Obama agrees to raise the age at which retirees can enroll in Medicare.

Because Democrats cannot run on their record of job destruction, brainless fiscal policy, and the Libyan “kinetic military action,” all they have left is class warfare and demagoguery. If Obama takes away those weapons from the leftist arsenal, Chuck Schumer will have to rely on sound arguments. No wonder he's upset with Obama.

Obama, of course, does not care about Chuck Schumer or any other Democrat. He just wants to be reelected so that Michelle can keep her lobster and her maids, he can keep his

taxpayer-paid body servant, Reggie Love, and the road to serfdom can continue to be paved by ACORN, the ACLU, the NLRB, the AFL-CIO, the EPA, the NEA, the TSA, the DOE... and all those other abbreviated citadels of socialism and fascism.

Obama's problem is that he wants to keep spending but he cannot keep spending without tax increases. He cannot get the tax increases he wants without Republican support, but many of them were elected in 2010 by pledging to cut spending and not raise taxes. The only way Obama might get even minimal tax increases is by agreeing to monumental spending cuts—but that would enrage the left and make it impossible for many Democrats in Congress to support the deal.

That leaves the current temporary occupant of our Oval Office with three choices:

1. Obama can agree to spending cuts and no tax increases, in exchange for an increase in the debt ceiling.
2. Obama can continue to paint the Republicans as evil and hope they cave in at the last minute.
3. Obama can stand firm and push the debt limit issue past August 2 in the hope that the Republicans will get most of the blame.

The first option is arguably the most reasonable, but Obama does not gain from it politically. In that scenario the GOP wins and he loses—and he appears increasingly irrelevant.

Option two does not exist—if the Republicans hold firm.

Option three is the most dangerous, but Obama has been backed into a corner by his own spending. He may decide to gamble that he can pull it off and have most of the blame directed to the Republicans, knowing the mainstream media will certainly cooperate. Obama does not take defeat well, and he may be willing to risk everything with option three rather than be defeated by House Republicans—and the Tea Party activists who are holding their feet to the fire.

But option three has several risks for Obama. The media will immediately blame the Republicans, but what if there is no disaster on August 2? If Americans wake up on August 3 and the sun is still shining, their cell phones and televisions still work, the buses still run, and the schools are still open, they may wonder what all the fuss was about. If the sky does not fall after Obama's repeated warnings that it would, who will take his 2012 campaign seriously?

Even worse for Obama, he will be forced to actually *do something* in exchange for his

salary and his free room and board. He will have to cancel all his golf outings because Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner will be tugging at his shirtsleeves, asking, “Who g-g-gets p-p-paid and who d-d-doesn’t?” Obama and Geithner will have to prioritize payments from the Treasury. They will have no choice but to place interest payments to creditors at the top of the list, along with military pay and Medicare and Social Security benefits. Obama cannot very well place Amtrak subsidies, payments to ACORN, or foreign aid to Egypt ahead of payments to senior citizens. Obama would be crucified politically if he does not choose payees wisely. In order to protect his reelection chances Obama will be forced to make responsible decisions—in effect, he will be forced to become a leader.

That creates the next risk for Obama. If he actually acts responsibly and pays the nation’s important bills while deferring payment of anything Americans can do without—while Congress haggles over what programs to cut—that will help prove to the voters that the debt ceiling did *not* have to be raised immediately and that there are in fact spending cuts that *can* be made. Obama’s dilemma is therefore that if he does a terrible job of deciding what bills to pay, he appears ineffective and incompetent, thereby further dooming his reelection chances. But if he does an excellent job, he plays right into the hands of those who have been arguing that there is a lot of federal fat that can be trimmed.

No wonder Obama has been so surly.

The outcome depends on whether the Republicans hold firm. When the Democrats predictably threaten, “We need more money for teachers, police officers, and firefighters will have to be laid off!” the Republicans (see “McConnell, Mitch”) usually cave in because they fear the public outcry if they do not. But in recent months some conservatives have proven that it is right to stand up to Democrat threats—and also good for the taxpayers. New Jersey Governor Chris Christie has called their bluff—and is saving his state in the process. Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker and Republican legislators in his state have done the same. In North Carolina, Republican legislators persuaded four Democrats to vote with them to override the Democrat governor’s veto of the budget. (She wanted more spending.) In Minnesota, Republican legislators told their Democrat-Socialist Governor Dayton “no new taxes,” and he responded by shutting down non-critical state operations. (Dayton’s maid and chef were considered critical state employees and were not laid off.) Minnesota is still standing, and few residents of the state have noticed any change in their daily lives.*

The truth is that Republicans can call Obama’s bluff. The outcome will be positive. The government will be forced to slash spending. Obama will be even weaker and less likely to be reelected. There will be hope for the future.

And we will get to see Keith Olbermann’s and Chris Matthews’ heads explode.

Hang in there, GOP!

Don Fredrick

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** On July 13 Governor Dayton accepted the Republican budget proposal.*

If you agree with the sentiments in this column, forward it to Republican Senators and Congressmen!

Note: According to the Daily Treasury Statements published by the U.S. Treasury Department, routine federal tax revenue is sufficient to cover interest payments on the national debt, Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, the Veterans Affairs department and federal workers wages and insurance benefits, including wages and insurance benefits for military personnel. All of those obligations can be met beyond August 2, but there will be insufficient revenue to pay other bills. Obama is lying when he says Social Security payments and military pay are at risk.

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