



ALLIANCE FOR PROGRESSIVE VALUES
GIVING YOUR VALUES A VOICE!

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President

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The Alliance for Progressive Values position on the legislation to raise the national debt ceiling passed out of Congress.

APV can not endorse the agreement passed this week to raise the debt ceiling. For decades the debt ceiling has been raised as a bipartisan matter of course by both parties with the understanding that it was imperative for the United States of America to pay its bills. Present Congressional Republican leadership voted over a dozen times to raise the debt ceiling during the Bush administration. There was good reason for them to do this. They were after all handed a balanced budget with surpluses stretching into the foreseeable future when they took control of the government just over a decade ago. They then proceeded to vote for massive tax cuts for corporations and the richest 1% that over the last decade cost trillions of dollars in lost revenue. They voted for a monumental unfunded Medicare prescription drug mandate that largely benefited drug companies and added another half trillion in debt. They doubled defense spending over the last decade and voted to engage the nation in two ruinously expensive wars of choice, adding several trillions more in debt to the budget deficit, and when Wall Street crashed the economy in 2008, they voted for the massive financial bailout the urgency of whose passage brought then majority leader Boehner to tears on the floor of the House of Representatives. They oversaw the largest expansion of government since the Second World War and they never once attempted to balance any of this with revenue increases of any kind. Now the bill has come due and the GOP has suddenly rediscovered fiscal discipline, they have taken the formally bipartisan debt ceiling vote hostage in exchange for devastating, irresponsible cuts to programs that serve the most vulnerable members of our society, the elderly, the disabled and the poor.

While the final bill agreed upon and passed on Monday and Tuesday staves off some of the worst excesses of the Tea Party agenda, it sets the stage for further extortion in the months to come. At a time when our nation's economy needs to be further stimulated and the focus of Congress and the administration should be on creating jobs, the specter of even more cuts in spending without the wealthy and the corporations having to pitch in at all, is just not acceptable. In specific, APV stands in clear opposition to:

- Any cuts in Social Security, a program currently in surplus. Long term issues within the program can be addressed with measures similar to those employed during the Reagan era.
- Any attempts to means test Social Security, or raise the age of participation above 65yrs. The most popular social program in American history needs to remain a national insurance policy paid into by all for the benefit of all. Moving the goal posts on seniors who rely on this program is simply shameful.

- Reductions in Medicare and Medicaid benefits. Medicare/Medicaid needs if anything to be expanded to cover all Americans through a national, single payer program. The Medicare administration should at the least be allowed to collectively bargain with healthcare providers and drug companies to reduce costs and improve service.
- Cuts in funding for basic scientific research, medical research, space exploration and technological research. Our nations ability to compete globally rests on the strength of our science and technology base.
- Efforts to privatize our national parks, public lands and nature reserves. Our natural resources belong to us as a nation and must not be sold off to preserve the tax cuts of the rich.
- Cuts to education at all levels. We need to be investing in our children's future not squandering their birthright on tax cuts and endless wars. We need to particularly address the ability of those less privileged in our society to receive a quality education. Low interest student loans and PELL grants must be preserved.
- Cuts to clean and renewable energy. We can't continue to hand out tax breaks to oil companies while we under-invest in the technologies of the future.
- Cuts to transportation and infrastructure. Our nations infrastructure is crumbling after decades of neglect. We need to invest more, not cut back on repairing and upgrading our highways, rail lines, energy grid and dams, dikes and levies. This can only strengthen our economy and provide much needed jobs.

Unable to advance their radical agenda through normal political means or at the ballot box, the fire eaters in the 112th Congress have taken to blackmail to achieve their ends. APV opposes giving in to blackmailers and rejects the extra-legislative economically disastrous "compromise" sent to the President today.

In these hard times we call for real negotiations based on shared sacrifice. We acknowledge that the ruinous policies of the last decade have left us with a dangerously high federal deficit. We approve of efforts to craft a budget that lowers spending while ensuring that progress made over generations remains intact. The Alliance for Progressive Values believes that the Peoples Budget, introduced by the Congressional Progressive Caucus, is a good starting point for constructive negotiations. We understand we wouldn't get everything we want and we'd have to compromise, but that is a far cry from the "*our way or the highway*" extortion of the House radicals. Responsible cuts to defense and the security state, an end to the Bush tax cuts for the wealthy, jobs bills and stimulus, investment in the environment, clean energy and education: these should be our starting points, not the wholesale capitulations of recent weeks.

APV will continue to work to further our goals of social justice, economic fairness and good government. This debate is far from over and we intend to have a place in this discussion.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Rodriguez