



No Room For Debate On The Debt Ceiling?

Obama Says He Won't Tolerate Debate On Increasing The Debt Ceiling, Even Though He And Many Of His Fellow Democrats Have Done So In The Past

Today, Obama Said He Would Not Tolerate Debate On Raising The Debt Ceiling. OBAMA: "These are bills that have already been racked up. And we need to pay them. So while I'm willing to compromise and find common ground over how to reduce our deficits, America cannot afford another debate with this Congress about whether or not they should pay the bills they have already racked up." (President Barack Obama, Presidential Press Conference, Washington, D.C., 1/14/13)

BUT OBAMA AND HIS DEMOCRAT COLLEAGUES HAVE ALL WISHED TO DEBATE THE DEBT IN THE PAST

FLASHBACK: In 2006, Then-Sen. Obama Voted Against The Senate Resolution to Increase The Debt Ceiling. ([H.J. Res 47](#): Adopted 52-48: R 51-3; D 1-43; I 0-1, 3/16/06, Obama Voted Nay)

- **Then-Sen. Obama Said "The Fact That We Are Here Today To Debate Raising America's Debt Limit Is A Sign Of Leadership Failure."** SEN. BARACK OBAMA: "Mr. President, I rise today to talk about America's debt problem. The fact that we are here today to debate raising America's debt limit is a sign of leadership failure. It is a sign that the U.S. Government can't pay its own bills. It is a sign that we now depend on ongoing financial assistance from foreign countries to finance our Government's reckless fiscal policies. Over the past 5 years, our federal debt has increased by \$3.5 trillion to \$8.6 trillion. That is 'trillion' with a 'T.' That is money that we have borrowed from the Social Security trust fund, borrowed from China and Japan, borrowed from American taxpayers. And over the next 5 years, between now and 2011, the President's budget will increase the debt by almost another \$3.5 trillion." (Sen. Barack Obama, [Congressional Record](#), 3/16/06, p. S2237)
- **Obama Said "Interest Payments Are A Significant Tax On All Americans—A Debt Tax That Washington Doesn't Want To Talk About."** SEN. BARACK OBAMA: "And the cost of our debt is one of the fastest growing expenses in the Federal budget. This rising debt is a hidden domestic enemy, robbing our cities and States of critical investments in infrastructure like bridges, ports, and levees; robbing our families and our children of critical investments in education and health care reform; robbing our seniors of the retirement and health security they have counted on. Every dollar we pay in interest is a dollar that is not going to investment in America's priorities."

Instead, interest payments are a significant tax on all Americans—a debt tax that Washington doesn't want to talk about. If Washington were serious about honest tax relief in this country, we would see an effort to reduce our national debt by returning to responsible fiscal policies.” (Sen. Barack Obama, [Congressional Record](#), 3/16/06, p. S2237)

- **Obama Concluded By Saying “America Has A Debt Problem And A Failure Of Leadership. Americans Deserve Better. I Therefore Intend To Oppose The Effort To Increase America’s Debt Limit.”** SEN. BARACK OBAMA: “Increasing America’s debt weakens us domestically and internationally. Leadership means that ‘the buck stops here.’ Instead, Washington is shifting the burden of bad choices today onto the backs of our children and grandchildren. America has a debt problem and a failure of leadership. Americans deserve better. I therefore intend to oppose the effort to increase America’s debt limit.” (Sen. Barack Obama, [Congressional Record](#), 3/16/06, p. S2237)

Senate Democrats Have Debated The Debt Ceiling

In 2003, Sen. Max Baucus (D-MT) Took To The Senate Floor To Denounce The Fiscal Irresponsibility Of Raising The Debt Ceiling Frequently And In Large Amounts. SEN. MAX BAUCUS: “The Federal debt is like the family credit card. Sooner or later you have to pay down the debts that you have already incurred. If you don’t, your credit rating will suffer. The way the Government raises the debt limit is also like a family who just keeps calling the bank every time they hit the credit limit and asks the bank over and over again for an increase in their credit limit without regard to anything else. Rather than pay down their debt, they just keep on asking for a higher debt limit. When the credit card bill comes, it is a time to reassess the family’s budget. It is a time to review the debts and to control the future spending. The fiscally responsible approach is that of the typical Montana family who, rather than just ask for an increase in their credit limit, sits down at the kitchen table and reassesses their budget. And so should we. Let’s put this in perspective. This debt limit increase is one big bill. This bill calls for an increase of almost \$1 trillion. I have a chart behind me that shows the increase of the debt limit. This bill calls for an increase of \$984 billion in the debt ceiling, nearly \$1 trillion. This will be the largest debt limit increase in history. This will be an increase of about \$3,400 in debt for every man, woman, and child in America. That is signified by the column on the right, which is the debt limit increase being asked for here. That is just the increase. The debt subject to limit is already more than \$22,000 per person. This \$3,400 increase would come on top of that. Before this bill, the largest increase was in 1990, under the first Bush administration. Then the Government increased the debt limit by \$915 billion. Since 1990, the Government has increased the debt limit five times. The average of those five increases was about \$450 billion. So \$984 billion is a very large number. It is out of line with the most recent precedents. It is too large a number for us to make now.” (Sen. Max Baucus, [Congressional Record](#), 5/23/03, p. S7089)

- **Baucus Said “It Is Time To Reassess. It Is Time To Change Course.”** BAUCUS: “It is time to reassess. It is time to change course. First, we need to stop making the deficits and the debt worse. We need to put the brakes on the size of spending increases and tax cuts.” (Sen. Max Baucus, [Congressional Record](#), 5/23/03, p. S7090)

In 2004, Sen. John Kerry (D-MA) Spoke On Raising The Debt Ceiling, Saying “Here We Are Again, Back Again, With A New [Fiscal] Hole, Deeper And With Graver Consequences Than At Any Time In American History.” “The defeated Democratic presidential candidate, John F. Kerry (Mass.), used the Senate floor to reprise campaign attacks on the Bush administration's deficit spending. ‘Here we are again, back again, with a new [fiscal] hole, deeper and with graver consequences than at any time in American history. . . . It’s the worst fiscal turnaround in our nation’s history,’ he said.” (Dan Morgan, “Senate Votes To Let Government Borrow More,” *The Washington Post*, 11/18/04)

In 2011, Sen. Mary Landrieu (D-LA) Said That Debt Is The “Issue Of The Decade” And That “America Cannot Be The Kind Of Strong, Innovative, And Creative Country With Debts And Deficits This High.” POLITICO’s JEANNE CUMMINGS: “And what overtures have you received or – if any – from Republicans that they want to work together in a partnership?” LANDRIEU: “Well as I said, it’s a little premature for that now. But I’ve been in several meetings where the attendance has been quite robust from both the Democratic side and the Republican side, listening to economists, understanding the magnitude of the gap that we are facing. And I hear – you know, picking up conversations here and there among senators – that they recognize that this is just not going to be able to be dealt with with a two-year freeze of federal workers, or a five-year freeze of federal workers, or a billion dollars here and a billion dollars there. It’s got to be a real structural change in long-term federal outlays as well as on the revenue side. I think it is the issue of the decade. I think that the numbers are that frightening. I think the numbers should jolt us into action. They are unsustainable. And America cannot be the kind of strong, innovative, and creative country with debts and deficits this high.” (Jeanne Cummings and James Hohmann, [“Debt Is ‘The Issue Of The Decade.’”](#) 2/15/11)

In 2003, Sen. Mark Pryor (D-AR) Said Of The Debt Ceiling That “Our Debt Will Unfairly Burden Future Generations, Making Our Children Responsible For The Failed Fiscal Policies Of Today And They Will Empty The Social Security Trust Fund Only A Few Years Before The First Wave Of Baby Boomers Are Set To Retire.” “We have surely regressed from the balanced-budget battle cries of the mid 90’s, but to me and many other Arkansans, deficits and debt still matter. Our burgeoning national debt will contribute to higher interest rates, making it less affordable for Americans to obtain small business loans, buy new homes, buy new cars or send their children to college. Moreover, our debt will unfairly burden future generations, making our children responsible for the failed fiscal policies of today and they will empty the Social Security trust fund only a few years before the first wave of baby boomers are set to retire. When it comes to debt, the sky should not be the limit. We have a responsibility in Congress to be stewards of our nation’s finances. Voting to raise the debt ceiling by almost a trillion dollars signals a failure on that front.” (Senator Mark Pryor (D-AR), “Statement By Senator Mark Pryor On Raising Our National Debt Ceiling,” [Press Release](#), 5/23/03)

- **Sen. Mark Pryor (D-AR): “When It Comes To Debt, The Sky Should Not Be The Limit. We Have A Responsibility In Congress To Be Stewards Of Our Nation’s Finances. Voting To Raise The Debt Ceiling By Almost A Trillion Dollars Signals A Failure On That Front.”** (Senator Mark Pryor (D-AR), “Statement By Senator Mark Pryor On Raising Our National Debt Ceiling,” [Press Release](#), 5/23/03)
- **In 2011, Pryor Said Of The Debt Ceiling Vote That “I’m Not Going To Vote For That Unless There Is A Real And Meaningful Commitment To Debt Reduction.”** “‘What I’ve told anyone who will listen to me in Washington, including my leadership, is that I’m not going to vote for that unless there is a real and meaningful commitment to debt reduction,’ Pryor told the Political Animals Club at its monthly meeting at the governor’s mansion.” (“Democrats Join Threat To Hold Up Debt Ceiling Vote Without Spending Cuts,” [Fox News](#), 4/21/11)

In 2006, Sen. Harry Reid (D-NV) Said Of The Debt Ceiling That “Given The Explosion Of Debt In Recent Years... The Future Of Our Economy And Our Nation Is At Stake.” SEN. HARRY REID: “Given the explosion of debt in recent years, it is long past time for Washington to change the course and adopt a new fiscal policy. After all, the future of our economy and our Nation is at stake.” (Sen. Harry Reid, [Congressional Record](#), 3/16/06, p. S2235)

- **Reid Said “Under The Circumstances, Any Credible Economist Would Tell You We Should Be Reducing Debt, Not Increasing It.”** SEN. HARRY REID: “After all, I repeat, the baby boomers are

about to retire. Under the circumstances, any credible economist would tell you we should be reducing debt, not increasing it.” (Sen. Harry Reid, [Congressional Record](#), 3/16/06, p. S2235)

In 2011, Sen. Mark Udall (D-CO) Said “I’ve Long Held This Is What We Need To Do. The Credit Agencies Are Saying It’s Not Enough To Take Care Of The Debt Limit. We Have To Take Care Of The Long-Term Fiscal Scenario.” “Mark Udall (D-Colo.), in saying he would support the Gang’s plan, added: ‘There’s a lot of support for turning the gang into a mob. ‘Count me in,’ he said. ‘I’ve long held this is what we need to do. The credit agencies are saying it’s not enough to take care of the debt limit. We have to take care of the long-term fiscal scenario.’” (Alexander Bolton and Erik Wasson, “Bipartisan Support Builds For Gang Of Six \$3.7 Trillion Deficit-Reduction Package,” [The Hill](#), 7/19/11)

- **In 2011, Udall Said In An Op-Ed With Sen. Mark Kirk (R-IL) That The Debt Ceiling Increase “Must Be Coupled With Long-Term Deficit Reduction.”** “Only a bipartisan, all-of-the-above plan, with shared sacrifices from both parties, will show the public that Congress recognizes the serious nature of the nation’s current economic crisis and is willing to fix it. The gang’s plan is our best hope, and we would like to see all senators encourage its momentum. It deserves the full attention of those negotiating an increase in the federal debt ceiling, which must be coupled with long-term deficit reduction.” (Senator Mark Kirk and Senator Mark Udall, Op-Ed, “Congress Has Basis For Deficit Deal,” [Politico](#), 6/3/11)

House Democrats Have Debated The Debt Ceiling

In 2004, Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) Spoke On Raising The Debt Ceiling, Saying “We Just Can’t Give A Blank Check Over And Over And Over Again To This Administration.” “Democrats plan to use the debt limit debate to highlight the massive annual deficits run up during the Bush administration. Many will oppose the measure, especially in the House. The bill is expected to be approved anyway, with the Senate voting Thursday night and the timing of the House vote uncertain. Its defeat would threaten an unprecedented federal default and stymie the government’s ability to write Social Security and other checks. ‘We just can’t give a blank check over and over and over again to this administration,’ said House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif.” (Alan Fram, “GOP Election Victory Shaping Budget Bills,” [The Associated Press](#), 11/17/04)

- **In 2006, Rep. Pelosi (D-CA) Decried A “Debt Ceiling Of \$9 Trillion.”** “But part of the Democrats’ plan is a call to require fiscal responsibility, following pay-as-you-go rules that prevent deficit spending. And they note that it is under a Republican president and Congress that the federal deficit has soared to new levels. ‘This is the path we were on when President Clinton was president, and we would have been debt free as a nation if we had stayed on that course of pay-as-you-go, no deficit spending, debt free as a nation in 2008,’ Pelosi said. ‘Instead, we have a debt ceiling of \$9 trillion.’” (Jill Zuckman, “Democrats Promise ‘A New Direction For All Americans,’” [Chicago Tribune](#), 6/15/06)

During The 2012 Campaign, Then-Candidate Cheri Bustos (D-IL) Attacked Her Opponent Rep. Bobby Schilling (R-IL) For His Vote To Raise The Debt Ceiling As “A Dangerous Vote.” Congressional incumbency has its blessings, but in so many ways it was easier for Representative Bobby Schilling to run for the House two years ago, when he was slinging dough at his family’s pizza place and tossing around barbs about Washington in his bid to be the first Republican to represent his corner of Illinois in a generation. ...Mr. Schilling’s opponent, Cheri Bustos, attacked him during a recent debate concerning a vote to raise the nation’s debt ceiling that would set off huge automatic spending cuts next year. ‘I think it was a dangerous vote,’ she said. ‘I think it was an irresponsible vote, and I think it’s time to take ownership for it.’ Later, Ms. Bustos would not say whether she would vote to raise the debt ceiling if

elected; that is the joy of being the challenger that Mr. Schilling knew just two years ago.” (Jennifer Steinhauer, “Ex-Outsiders, Running On Record In Congress,” [The New York Times](#), 10/27/12)

In 2010, Rep. Ann Kirkpatrick (D-AZ) Voted Against Raising The Debt Ceiling Saying “We Cannot Allow This Country To Go Trillions Of Dollars Deeper In Debt Without Committing To A Plan To Pay It Back.” “The Congresswoman has been pushing hard for Washington to make real progress on reducing the deficit and paying down the national debt, and voted against the previous debt ceiling increase in December. With the Senate's failure to approve a strong, independent debt commission and a budget proposal from the White House that adds \$100 billion to last year's record deficit, she believes that not nearly enough is being done to get our fiscal house in order. ‘The federal government has not lived up to its responsibilities on the debt. Everyone understands how serious the problem is, yet Washington is unwilling to start making the tough choices it will take to fix it,’ said Rep. Kirkpatrick. ‘We cannot allow this country to go trillions of dollars deeper in debt without committing to a plan to pay it back.’” (Rep. Ann Kirkpatrick (D-AZ), “Rep. Kirkpatrick Stands Up For Fiscal Discipline With Votes To Block \$1.9 Trillion Debt Limit Increase, Re-Establish PayGo Rules,” Press Release, 2/4/10)