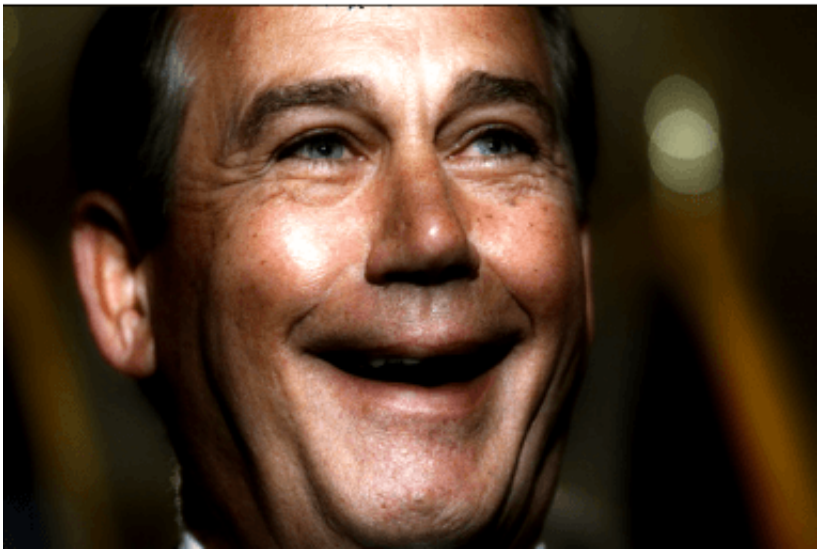
Boehner Bends Left. On The Heels Of the DHS Funding Vote Will He Do Same To Pass A Clean Debt Limit Extension This Fall?

Author : michaelbloomer



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Glamour glowing . . . for now.[/caption]

Michael JF Matheron, March 4. 2015

With their iconic elephant in the lead, the debt limit carnival is upon us, as in again and again. We'll hold our collective breath as we await news whether America has moved into foreclosure. Ted Cruz and other tightrope walkers will thrill us, lion tamer team McConnell & Boehner will crack their whips, and Louie Gohmert, Steve King, and Marsha Blackburn will lead the clown posse. How far will they go this time?

In 2013 the unrepentant caucus succeeded, closing down government operations for 15 October days, the public reaction, somewhere between grousing and furious. GOP perpetrators overplayed their belief that "they the people" would cheer them on. They didn't. In February 2014, Democrats and slightly less insane GOP congressloons extended the debt limit until March 15, 2015, ten days from today. Yesterday, though, CBO reported that due to increased tax revenues, Treasury can fund the nation's finances until September or October 2015, thereby postponing the legislative battle until then.

Then, however, the 2016-2017 budget *and* the debt limit, two major GOP targets, will simultaneously sit at anchor in harbor. Is this not a recipe for a no holds barred street fight? GOP vs. GOP, GOP vs. Democrats, GOP vs. lame duck Obama, all with the 2016 primaries within sighting. With cries of "Let's make crazy happen!", Fall 2015 could, easily, roll out the GOP at its worst unless something or someone medicates them between now and then. Speaker John Boehner and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell promised there will be no government shutdowns or debt default. Can they enforce these orders? Will this fractured GOP congressional delegation - one that barely agreed on a formula to fund the Department of Homeland Security - permit a clean debt limit bill through their 50-60 Tea Party/Libertarian blockaders?

Given Boehner's handling of the final DHS vote, he and McConnell might succeed but *only with the help of Democrats* who will not vote for any GOP proposal that includes Obama-bashing over executive power, or Obamacare, or knee-capping a debt ceiling bill, or typically draconian GOP spending cuts. For the final DHS vote Boehner gave up on the (apparently fictional) "Hastert Rule" that was thought to block the Speaker from taking votes on proposals that are not agreed to by a GOP majority, the majority *of* the majority. This worked. The final 'clean bill,' for example, included *167 GOP 'nays and only 75 'yeas,*' far from a GOP majority. But Democrats, freed from the anti-Obama provisions in the "unclean" bill, were, with the 167 Republicans, able to pass the measure. [See how your representative voted]; [and your Senators].

To get the clean bill through, Boehner bent left. Ouch! Can he bend even more often. without breaking? Ditto McConnell. It took five Senate votes to reach the Nirvana of a clean DHS bill.

Below is the CBO's latest debt limit report:

[embed]http://www.cbo.gov/sites/default/files/cbofiles/attachments/49961-DebtLimit.pdf[/embed

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