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Economic and Domestic Policy, and Lots of It

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- 3 William Blake [searches](#) the Constitution and the statements of the Framers for evidence that they envisioned supermajority rules in the Senate. Short version: They didn't.
- 4 Law professors Josh Chafetz and Michael Gerhardt [debate](#) the constitutionality of the filibuster.
- 5 Nelson Polsby's classic essay, [Congress-bashing for beginners](#).

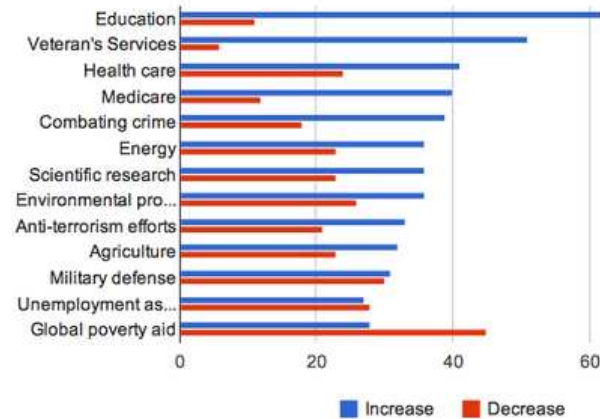
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Posted at 6:46 AM ET, 02/11/2011

Wonkbook: Tea Party wins their first budget fight

By Ezra Klein

Pew poll: Should we increase or decrease funding for...



That went fast. Yesterday's Wonkbook lede was about the \$32 billion in cuts that the House Republican leadership had previewed for the rest of 2011. Today lede is about the \$100 billion of cuts they're now searching to find for 2011. Why \$100 billion? Because the campaign promise was to cut \$100 billion in their first budget, and House conservatives revolted against efforts to cut even a dime less.

The argument the House leadership made was that it wasn't cutting less, and this wasn't really their first budget. These cuts were for the part of fiscal year 2011 which didn't get included in December's continuing resolution -- namely, March to September. Because that's much less than a full year, smaller cuts were equal, in terms of how much they slashed government services, than bigger cuts. The \$32 billion was more like \$74 billion, at least if you compared it to the full-year budget request Obama had made back in February of 2010. You had to annualize the cuts.

But "when I say 'ANNU,' you say 'LIZE,'" doesn't really get the crowd going at CPAC, or anywhere else. So now House leadership is stuck in a place it really didn't want to be: Making \$100 billion in cuts to non-defense discretionary spending that have to be carried out in the next seven months. Boehner and his team came in determined to avoid the mistakes that newt Gingrich made. They were going to be humble, they wouldn't overread their mandate, they wouldn't go for draconian cuts in services that weren't defensible once they had to be explained. They lost. They're going to need to propose three times as many cuts now.

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And this comes alongside a new Pew [poll](#) (pdf) showing that the only category of federal spending that a majority of *Republicans* support cutting is foreign aid. On everything from Social Security to education to crime prevention to scientific research, more spending is preferred.

This loss, much more than the failed votes on the extension of the PATRIOT Act or funds for the United Nations (both of which were brought to the floor under a rule requiring a 2/3rd majority for passage) shows that the House GOP leadership has little sway and less control over the rank-and-file. The Republican Study Committee seems more powerful than the Republican leadership at this point. The budget proposal produced by Rep. Jim Jordan won out over the one favored by Rep. Paul Ryan. If I were a betting man, I'd say the odds of a government shutdown -- either over cuts or the debt ceiling -- just went up dramatically.

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House Republican leadership bowed to conservative members' calls for more cuts, [reports](#) Lori Montgomery: "An already [wobbly week for House Republicans](#) turned chaotic Thursday as their unruly new majority flatly rejected a [spending plan](#) crafted by House leaders, saying its cuts fell far short of fulfilling a campaign pledge to slice \$100 billion from federal programs. House leaders offered to redo the package but were struggling to identify the massive and unprecedented cuts that will be required to meet their goal. Dissatisfied conservatives, meanwhile, were pressing for even sharper reductions that could prove difficult to push through the House, much less the Democratic-controlled Senate. The uprising exposed serious divisions among Republicans bent on [reducing the size of government](#)."

A new Pew poll shows that the appetite for specific budget cuts is low, even among Republicans, [writes](#) Jon Cohen: "Across 18 areas of federal spending, a majority of Republicans support decreasing spending in just one: aid to the world's needy. In one other area, unemployment assistance, 50 percent of Republicans polled said they would decrease spending (far higher than the 11 percent who said they would increase it), but in all others the number saying funds should be cut is under the 50 percent mark. When it comes to three big ticket items - Social Security, Medicare and defense spending - more Republicans want increases than decreases in federal outlays. Support for budget cuts is, unsurprisingly, lower still among Democrats and independents."

Obama is promoting a plan to provide wireless internet to 98 percent of the US, [reports](#) Cecilia Kang: "President Obama outlined a plan Thursday to create similar economic stories through the expansion of super-fast wireless Internet connections. Speaking at Northern Michigan University, Obama said he would use \$18 billion in federal funds to get 98 percent of the nation connected to the Internet on smartphones and tablet computers in five years. To get there, the federal government will try to bring more radio waves into the hands of wireless carriers to bolster the nation's networks and prevent a jam of Internet traffic. He said he hoped to raise about \$27.8 billion by auctioning airwaves now in the hands of television stations and government agencies. And with that auction money, the government would fund new rural 4G wireless networks."

The administration's report on dismantling Fannie and Freddie will be released today, [reports](#) Zachary Goldfarb: The Obama administration is pushing ahead with a vast rewrite of the rules of the nation's mortgage market separately from the delicate task of devising options to abolish mortgage finance giants Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. In a long-awaited report Friday on the future of home loans, the administration will address both efforts. Much of the focus is expected to be on determining the future of Fannie and Freddie, which rely on a massive taxpayer bailout to prop up the mortgage market. But perhaps equally important will be measures to protect borrowers against taking on loans they can't afford, draw private firms back into the mortgage finance business and prevent excessive risk-taking by financial companies."

The White House considered, and rejected, raising the payroll tax cap and slowing Social Security benefit increases in this year's budget, [reports](#) Laura Meckler: "The White House last month

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