

## **GOP Rank and File Take Opportunity to Vent**

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House Republicans emerged from a closed-door Conference meeting Tuesday calling the hour-plus venting session constructive and productive — though what the meeting will produce remains uncertain.

None of the top GOP leaders addressed the gathering, opting instead to listen while rank-and-file Members lined up to take their two-minute turn at the microphone.

“What you’re seeing today is a real pulling together of the Conference, and it comes at a good time: six months before the election,” Rep. Zach Wamp (Tenn.) said after leaving the session early.

Wamp said media reports that the party is deep in “crisis and conflict” are overblown, as has been the notion that heads need to roll within the GOP leadership.

“It’s actually just the opposite,” he said, adding that there is “full support for this elected leadership team” within the Conference.

Republicans have been reeling since last week’s special election loss in Mississippi — the party’s third loss this year.

Last week, National Republican Congressional Committee Chairman Tom Cole (Okla.) accepted responsibility for the Magnolia State loss, and Cole and House Minority Leader John Boehner (Ohio) have been discussing possible changes in the party’s campaign apparatus.

In the special elections in Louisiana and Mississippi, the NRCC attempted to link the Democratic candidates with national Democrats such as Sen. Barack Obama (Ill.) and Speaker Nancy Pelosi (Calif.).

“We cannot nationalize our campaigns except on two issues,” said Rep. Vernon Ehlers (R-Mich.), adding those are energy and pork. “Don’t call them earmarks. They’re pork. That’s what the American people understand.”

Republicans began to roll out a set of agenda items last week and will continue that effort today with an energy package.

Boehner spokesman Michael Steel said that Members had been very involved in development of the GOP’s agenda and that the lawmakers’ input would continue to be considered.

“Everyone is still listening to new ideas and seeing how they fit into our goal of showing voters that House Republicans are offering the change that America deserves,” Steel said.

The Republican Study Committee unveiled their action plan at Tuesday’s meeting. RSC Chairman Jeb Hensarling (Texas) was among the Members who requested the meeting.

“With six months left to go, there’s much we can do to impact our destiny,” Hensarling said.

Hensarling said last week's agenda blueprint from leadership was only a starting point.

"That was supposed to be one slice of the pie, not the whole pie," he said.

Rep. Bob Inglis (S.C.) also distributed his version of an action plan for the GOP, arguing the same old, same old isn't going to cut it.

"We've come to the end of our track," he said. "We've got to get a different track and it starts with credibility."