



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Van Hollen: Republican Sequester Replacement is a Charade

Washington, DC – *Today Maryland Congressman Chris Van Hollen, Ranking Member of the House Budget Committee, spoke on the House floor in opposition to the Republican sequester replacement bill that does not take a balanced approach to deficit reduction. Video of his remarks is available [here](#) and the transcript is below:*

“Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is really quite a charade we’re engaged in here today on the House of Representatives’ floor. Let’s just flash back a year to how we got to this spot. At that time, our Republican colleagues threatened that the United States would default on its full faith and credit, that we wouldn’t pay the bills that we already incurred – that this Congress had already voted for – and threatened to tank the economy unless we passed their version of the budget, the Ryan budget, the budget that came out of the House Budget Committee. So in order to prevent the United States from defaulting, everybody got together, the House, the Senate, the President, and they passed the Budget Control Act.

“To hear our Republican colleagues today, you’d think they had nothing to do with the Budget Control Act. We heard the chairman of the Budget Committee, Mr. Ryan, on television the other day saying, well I don’t really, you know – he didn’t want to associate myself with that and the reality is he voted for it, the Speaker of the House said he got 98 percent of what he wanted. Here’s the Speaker of the House after we passed the Budget Control Act, “I got 98 percent of what I wanted. I’m pretty happy.”

“So now we’re faced with the consequences of the Budget Control Act. What did it do? Two things. It cut spending, discretionary spending, over 10 years by \$1 trillion, by putting in spending caps. And it created a sequester process.

“Now, there’s agreement in this House that allowing the meat-ax sequester cuts to take place would be a really stupid thing to do. There’s agreement on that. The issue is, how do we replace that? How do we achieve a similar amount of deficit reduction to replace that sequester?

“We hear our Republican colleagues say there’s no leadership from the President, they haven’t heard any alternatives. That’s just not true. There are lots of alternatives that have been put on the table. They just don’t like the alternatives. And you know why? Because the Democratic

alternatives to the sequester, and the one put forward by the President, take the same balanced approach that's been recommended by bipartisan commissions.

"They say that in order to tackle our deficit we should make additional cuts, but we should also eliminate a lot of special interest tax breaks for big oil companies, that we should ask the very wealthy to go back to paying a little bit more in taxes – about what they were paying when President Clinton was president, the last time we balanced our budget. So the President has submitted that. In fact, a year ago the President sent down a plan – right here – on how we could take a balanced approach to deficit reduction.

"Just yesterday in the Rules Committee, on behalf of my Democratic colleagues, we proposed a substitute that would totally have replaced the sequester. Again, through a mix of cuts – cutting some of the excessive agriculture subsidies. But also raising revenue by cutting some of the big breaks for big oil companies and asking the wealthiest to chip in a little bit more.

"So our Republican colleagues, who say they want a big open debate on the floor here, they denied us even a vote on that amendment. We're not going to vote today on that amendment. Instead we're voting on this resolution that, even if we pass it and the Senate passes it and the President were to sign it, it would do nothing about the sequester. Nothing. That's why I said that this is a charade.

"So we had an option to bring to the floor of this House a real substitute proposal, that if we passed it would have removed the sequester – made sure there are no cuts to defense and nondefense on the sequester. We don't get to vote on that today. Instead we're voting on something that's totally meaningless.

"They say they're going to ask the President to submit a report to Congress. He's already done it. He did it a year ago. They just don't like it. Because it takes a balanced approach, because it does ask big oil companies to give up some of their big taxpayer subsidies.

"So, Mr. Speaker, let's end the charade. The moment our Republican colleagues come to the conclusion that it's more important to protect defense spending than it is to protect special interest tax breaks for big oil companies, we can move on and deal with this in a balanced way. The same way bipartisan commissions have recommended. And I reserve the balance of my time."

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