



COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

DAVID R. OBEY, CHAIRMAN

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Press Contact: Ellis Brachman (202) 225-2771

OBEY STATEMENT ON 2011 FULL YEAR FUNDING ACT

WASHINGTON – Congressman Dave Obey (D-WI), Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, made the following statement on the House Floor during debate on the amendment to H.R. 3082 providing for FY 2011 full year funding:

“Mr. Speaker,

“I’m bringing a resolution to the floor that I have minimum high regard for, to say the least.

“America is facing serious problems. The most depressing is that we have the biggest divide between the haves and the have nots since the Great Depression. Over the last decade, 80% of the growth in our economy has gone to the luckiest 10% out there. Meanwhile, the economy is sputtering along and families are hurting.

“And what has been Washington’s response?

“Apparently it is to spend nearly eighty billion dollars over the next two years to give super sized tax cuts to millionaires and another twenty-four billion to give families worth ten million dollars a pass on paying taxes on their good fortunes.

“This occurs at the same time that Washington politicians are singing pious songs about the need for deficit reduction.

“I hope that the Congress is not too offended to recognize that, yes, we must deal with long term budget deficits, but if this country is to grow for everybody, we also need to confront our investment deficits in jobs, in education, in infrastructure, and science and technology.

“That is the context in which this bill to keep the government functioning for a year is being considered.

“This bill freezes discretionary appropriations at the 2010 level for the rest of the fiscal year; spending \$46 billion less than the President asked for this year.

“It adjusts last year’s priorities in three main ways: It funds the current shortfall in Pell Grants for college students. It meets the increased medical needs of our veterans. And it makes adequate adjustments to meet military pay and health costs.

“It provides the Department of Defense \$513 billion - \$4.9 billion more than last year – with corresponding cuts on the domestic side of the ledger, I’m sorry to say.

“Now I’m sure we’ll hear lots of talk about the number of changes in this bill. The number of hard choices we had to make in this package to try to keep Uncle Sam from becoming Uncle Scrooge this holiday season.

“John Wesley admonished us to “Do all the good you can, By all the means you can, In all the ways you can, In all the places you can, At all the times you can, To all the people you can, As long as ever you can.”

“This product falls embarrassingly short of that goal.

“But I make no apologies for the fact that the Committee has done its dead level best - within the constraints under which we’re operating - to make some modest adjustments to salvage some investments which over the long haul just might create more jobs than tax breaks for millionaires and adjustments that might ease the financial desperation facing so many families today who cannot afford to send their kids to college, to find decent child care, or to provide adequate medical attention for their needs.

- We had the unmitigated gall to shift additional funds to the Social Security Administration to ensure that people get their benefits without undue delay.
- In an outrageously “socialistic” attempt to provide some additional health safety protections for miners who have all too often been the victims of the mindset of owners who put more emphasis on profitability than they do on miner safety, we shifted about \$50 million into that account.
- I hope that the Congress is not so penny wise and pound foolish that they will object to our decision to shift funding to further our efforts to ferret out waste, fraud, and abuse in Social Security and Medicare.
- And on a day when temperatures are dropping to five above zero in my home town and were a balmy twenty-three degrees here in Washington last night, I hope this Congress isn’t too offended that we’ve recommended \$190 million above last year for homeless assistance grants to combat the growing number of families who are living on the streets thanks to the brilliance of political leaders in Washington in managing this economy.

“Those are a few of the modest changes that we have made in what would otherwise be an automatic pilot course of action in a straight continuing resolution. Within the same dollar limits, this legislation attempts to make modest adjustments that recognize that needs and conditions change over a year’s time.

“I hope it does not represent too great an inconvenience to those Members in this body who are much more comfortable in providing budget busting tax gifts to the economic elite in this country rather than making even the tiniest government investment in programs that will help make the lives of the unlucky a little bit better and the investments that might run the unholy risk of making the economy work nearly as well for average families as it does for the American elite who can afford to make large political contributions to those fortunate enough to be honored by our constituents with stewardship of the national interest.

“I want to say one other thing. There are at least fifty decisions in this bill that I am flatly opposed to. There are many arguments in this bill that I have lost. But the fact is, sooner or later, if you’re going to be responsible, you have to set aside your first preferences and simply do what is necessary in order to keep the government open so that Congress doesn’t become the laughingstock of the country. The only responsible vote to cast on this proposition is an "aye" vote. I urge support for the resolution, with all of its shortcomings.”

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