

BANKRUPTING AMERICA

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The Debt Limit Compromise: A Joint Committee

In a recent compromise, the White House and Congressional leaders passed the Budget Control Act. In addition to raising the debt ceiling and slowing the increase of future government spending, the Budget Control Act established a super-committee to find further cuts in federal spending.

The Super Committee: Who Are They?

- Legal Establishment
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Legal Establishment

The additional spending cuts called for in the Budget Control Act (BCA) require the details to be worked out in a Joint Selection Committee on Deficit Reduction made up of equal representation of Republicans and Democrats in the Senate and House. This committee is the so-called "super-committee."

- The committee is tasked with finding a targeted \$1.5 trillion in savings over ten yearsⁱ.
- If no savings from the committee's recommendations become law, automatic across-the-board spending cuts take effect for both defense and non-defense spending. There are some protections for entitlement spending from these cuts. These automatic cuts must equal an estimated \$1.2 trillion, if none of the committee's recommendations become lawⁱⁱ.

The Super Committee

Six Democrats and six Republicans (three each from the House and Senate) have been appointed to the committee to begin negotiations. Who are they, and what are their backgrounds?

House of Representatives

Democrats



Xavier Becerra (CA-31)

Member of the Committee on Ways and Means; Democratic Caucus Vice Chair; member of the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform

Becerra tends to align with House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi and is a leader in setting Democrat policy stances. Additionally, he is an advocate for lower taxes on the poor, a public option for healthcare, and immediate withdrawal from Iraq and Afghanistan. ⁱⁱⁱ



James Clyburn (SC-6)

Assistant Democratic Leader; former member of the Committee on Appropriations; no current committee assignments

As the third-ranking Democrat in the House, Clyburn unites urban liberals and rural blue-dog Democrats. He frequently counsels President Obama. ³



Chris Van Hollen (MD-8)

Ranking member of the Committee on the Budget; former Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Chairman; former member of the Committee on Ways and Means

After serving as the man in charge of getting Democrats elected to Congress several years ago, Van Hollen has quickly become a leader in Democrat policy. He is an advocate for tax credits to advanced biofuel producers and addressing the Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT), a tax that has the potential to impact many of his constituents. ³

Republicans



Jeb Hensarling (TX-5) (Co-Chair of Joint Committee)

Vice Chairman of the Financial Services Committee; Republican Conference Chairman; member of the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform

As the number four Republican in the House, Hensarling rarely strays from the party line. When he does, it is because he is even more conservative than the leadership.³



David Camp (MI-4)

Chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means; member of the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform

Camp, an expert in tax issues, is an advocate of cutting spending rather than raising taxes to get our debt under control.³



Fred Upton (MI-6)

Chairman of the Committee on Energy and Commerce

Upton is known as a moderate Republican. During President George W. Bush's presidency, few Republican representatives broke from the White House agenda more often than Upton.³

Senate

Democrats



Patty Murray (WA) – Up for reelection in 2016 (Co-Chair of Joint Committee)

Serves on the Budget and Appropriations Committees; Chair of the Veterans Committee; Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee Chair; Democratic Conference Secretary

Senator Murray is a liberal voice in Congress for government involvement in the economy. She is an advocate for infrastructure spending.³



Max Baucus (MT) - Up for reelection in 2014

Chairman of the Committee on Finance; member of the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform

Baucus has a history of working in a bipartisan fashion, including being one of a select few of Democrats to work on the Republican's Medicare Part D bill. He also supported President Bush's 2001 tax cuts.³



John Kerry (MA) - Up for reelection in 2014

Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

Kerry is a social liberal and foreign relations leader. He has experience in building consensus and moving bills through the Senate, such as the U.S.-Russia Nuclear Arms Treaty.³

Republicans



Jon Kyl (AZ) - Retiring at the end of this Congress

Republican Whip; member of the Committee on Finance

A leader in Republican thought, Kyl's positions on foreign policy and tax matters usually become the GOP position.³



Pat Toomey (PA) - Up for reelection in 2016

Member of the Committees on Banking and the Budget (joined the Senate in 2010)

A senator who enjoys Tea Party support, Toomey is a strong believer in free markets and limited government. He was once an investment banker.³



Rob Portman (OH) - Up for reelection in 2016

Member of the Budget Committee (joined the Senate in 2010)

Senator Portman brings true policy experience and expertise to the deficit negotiations. He served both as Trade Representative and as director of the Office of Management and Budget, both cabinet level positions under President Bush.³

Key Votes ^{iv}

House	2006 Capitol Gains, Dividends, & AMT Tax Cut Extension	Farm Subsidies	Fannie Freddie Bailout	TARP	2009 Obama Stimulus	Cash for Clunkers	2010 Bush Tax Cut Extension
Xavier Becerra*	Against	For	For	Against	For	For	Against
James Clyburn	Against	For	For	For	Not Voting**	For	Against
Chris Van Hollen	Against	For	For	For	For	For	Against
Jeb Hensarling*	For	Against	Against	Against	Against	Against	For
David Camp*	For	For	Against	For	Against	For	For
Fred Upton	For***	For	Against	For	Against	For	For
Senate	2006 Capitol Gains, Dividends, & AMT Tax Cut Extension	Farm Subsidies	Fannie Freddie Bailout	TARP	2009 Obama Stimulus	Cash for Clunkers	2010 Bush Tax Cut Extension
Max Baucus*	Against	For	For	For	For	For	For
John Kerry	Against	For	For	For	For	For	For
Patty Murray	Against	For	Not Voting	For	For	For	For
Jon Kyl	For	Against	Against	For	Against	Against	For
Pat Toomey****							
Rob Portman****							

* Voted against the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform proposal'

**Voted for an earlier version of this stimulus.

***Voted against an earlier version of this bill and was one of three Republicans to do so; he later flip-flopped to back the bill.

**** No recent key votes, though Toomey has been extremely critical of both TARP and the 2009 stimulus.

References:

ⁱ White House: Fact Sheet: Bipartisan Debt Deal. July 31, 2011. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/07/31/fact-sheet-bipartisan-debt-deal-win-economy-and-budget-discipline>

ⁱⁱ White House: Fact Sheet: Bipartisan Debt Deal. July 31, 2011. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/07/31/fact-sheet-bipartisan-debt-deal-win-economy-and-budget-discipline>

ⁱⁱⁱ All member biographies are from CQ.com's Full Member Bio subscription service.

Becerra: <http://www.cq.com/person/H0411>

Clyburn: <http://www.cq.com/person/H3673>

Van Hollen: <http://www.cq.com/person/H1712>

Hensarling: <http://www.cq.com/person/H4520>

Camp: <http://www.cq.com/person/H1932>

Upton: <http://www.cq.com/person/H1872>

Murray: <http://www.cq.com/members/card.do?personId=S0943>

Baucus: <http://www.cq.com/members/card.do?personId=S0510>

Kerry: <http://www.cq.com/members/card.do?personId=S0421>

Kyl: <http://www.cq.com/members/card.do?personId=S0051>

Toomey: <http://www.cq.com/members/card.do?personId=H3492>

Portman: <http://www.cq.com/members/card.do?personId=H3021>

^{iv} Voting Records

2006 Capitol Gains, Dividends, & AMT Tax Cut Extension: U.S. Senate Roll Call Vote, H.R. 4297. May 11, 2006.

http://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/roll_call_vote_cfm.cfm?congress=109&session=2&vote=00118 and U.S. House of Representatives Final Vote Results Roll Call 135. May 10, 2006.

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<http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2008/roll519.xml>

Tarp: U.S. Senate Roll Call Vote, H.R. 1424. October 1, 2008.

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Obama Stimulus: U.S. Senate Roll Call Vote, H.R. 1 Conference Report. February 13, 2009.

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<http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2009/roll070.xml>

Cash for Clunkers Refill Funding: Library of Congress: U.S. Senate Roll Call Vote, H.R. 3435. August 6, 2009.

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^v Obama Debt Commission Recommendations: Fiscal Commission Member Statements. December 3, 2010.

<http://www.fiscalcommission.gov/sites/fiscalcommission.gov/files/documents/MemberStatements.pdf>