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From U.S. Congressman Jim Bridenstine, Oklahoma 1st District

House Republicans have created a plan bold in name, but weak in substance. It's called "No Budget, No Pay". Here is the plan:

1. Suspend the debt limit until May 19th.
2. Make zero cuts to spending in the deal.
3. Violate the 27th Amendment of the Constitution by "varying" congressional compensation.
4. Let military sequestration take effect, cutting $500 billion from the Department of Defense.
5. Pass a Continuing Resolution codifying federal spending at post-sequester levels.
6. Wait to fight for spending cuts until we hit the debt ceiling again in May 2013.

Here are the reasons I am voting "no" on "No Budget, No Pay."

The first part of the "No Budget, No Pay" strategy is to suspend the debt limit through May 19, 2013 with no spending cuts. It seems Republicans have decided not to leverage the debt limit to achieve real reforms. In lieu of cuts, the bill will contain language stating that the Senate must pass a budget or not be paid. This sounds strong, but there will be no clause stating that the Senate budget must place us on a path to fiscal responsibility. Nor will there be a clause stating that the Senate budget must be reconciled with the House budget. This is seemingly just a ploy.

American voters do not want the debt ceiling to be raised without spending cuts. A CBS News / New York Times poll, conducted January 11-15, found 60% of all Americans want to see the debt ceiling raised *with* spending cuts. Only 17% want the ceiling raised without cuts. A Fox News poll reported 69% who say Congress should only raise the debt limit after agreeing on major cuts in spending.

A suspension of the debt ceiling is more alarming than an increase. The bill as presented leaves no statutory limit on federal debt. It assumes that the Treasury will not reverse its extraordinary measures, replacing the funds "borrowed" from other accounts by issuing billions of additional debt in the three month interval. That is an assumption that has not been acceptable in the past and is not acceptable today.

I campaigned saying I would raise the debt ceiling only if substantial spending cuts or a balanced budget amendment was included. Raising the ceiling without negotiating spending cuts will disappoint voters, putting a lot of pressure on everyone who campaigned on fiscal conservatism or responsibility.

Since the Democratic Senate will not go for a 3-month debt limit suspension that ties their pay to a budget, this plan will be spun as gimmicky and not serious. Republicans will not win the public relations effort, but they will be on record voting to allow the debt to increase with no spending cuts. This will alienate the Republican base.

The second part of the "No Budget, No Pay" strategy is to let sequestration take effect in March, cutting $500 billion from the Department of Defense. This is intended to put pressure on the Democrats to

reform entitlements. Using threats to curtail military funding to create a crisis for the purpose of political advantage is an inappropriate policy. This bad policy also enables the President to continue compromising our national security for a social welfare agenda that restricts economic freedom, punishes achievement, cripples our economy, and makes us less competitive in the world.

It should be noted that there are no new savings when we allow the Sequester to take place. These savings were a result of the August 2011 debt ceiling increase negotiation. It should also be noted that using a debt limit increase to control spending has been successful in the past and it will be successful in February 2013 if Republicans are willing to forgo the "No Budget, No Pay" debt limit suspension for a real negotiation.

The third part of the "No Budget, No Pay" strategy is to codify the Sequester with a continuing resolution at post-sequester spending levels. Again, there are no new savings here. These savings were a result of the 2011 debt limit increase negotiations. We need new savings (cuts, reforms, etc.)

The fourth part of the "No Budget, No Pay" strategy is to have a "real" fight over the debt limit in May. The reality is that if a vote to raise the debt limit 'clean' (without spending cuts) comes to the floor, 30 Republicans will join 200 Democrats and there will be no savings realized.

My final concern is the most difficult to ignore. "Varying" congressional compensation appears unconstitutional by both letter and original intent. The text of the 27th Amendment was submitted by the Framers as part of the original Bill of Rights in 1789. It was ratified in 1992, 202 years later. If the Framers of the 27th Amendment had simply meant that compensation of Senators and Representatives not be "increased nor diminished" then they would have used that exact phrase as it stands in the Constitution referring to the compensation of the President in Article II, Section 1. Instead, the Amendment is written , "No law, varying the compensation." Varying the timing of payment is varying the payment. Your banker will testify.