

A survey released last week found 87 percent of Americans disapprove of the performance of Congress. But even this dysfunctional and free-spending, liberal Congress can leave town on a high note, thanks to a little help from conservatives.

Speaker Pelosi officially gives up her gavel on January 5, 2011, but that has not prevented her from forcing eleventh-hour votes on bloated, pork-laden budgets and controversial immigration and government expansion bills. Nevertheless, this is the week of Christmas and, accordingly, there is still reason for the country to be merry.

As families gather from San Francisco to Savannah for holiday cheer, it will surely warm the hearts of more than a few to know that come January first no one's taxes will increase. Speaker Pelosi was prepared to drive our economy over the side of the cliff with a \$3.9 trillion tax increase come New Year's Day.

Yet, Senate and House Republican leaders were able to forge an agreement with the president to save the public and our fragile economy from her new taxes, and not a moment too soon.

The House passed the tax cut agreement legislation last Thursday night by a vote of 277 to 148.

Even before the ink had dried, some complained that Republicans gave up too much in the remarkable tax cut agreement, which was negotiated largely without the input of Congressional Democrats. They see the tax cut legislation as a glass half empty, rather than a pragmatic move by Republicans to honor our pledge to stand against any tax increases.

This achievement was not easy lifting. No one on the left, not the president, not Speaker Pelosi, nor Senate Leader Reid – all of whom still retain power – wanted to lose the opportunity to get their hands on the mountain of new tax dollars that the expiring tax cuts would have provided. Republicans denied the biggest-spending administration in our country's history access to \$3.9 trillion in new revenue.

Furthermore, I'm pleased to note that Senate Republicans forced the Democrat leadership last week to ditch a last minute catch-all budget bill stuffed with 6,700 earmarks totaling \$8.3 billion.

The new Republican House has banned all earmarks.

Admittedly, play calling is easy from the bleachers, but punting the tax cut negotiations into the next Congress would have placed many small businesses and all taxpayers at great financial risk. A Democrat president and Democrat-controlled Senate – which is what we will face come January – would not willingly give back billions in newly collected taxes, and the Republican-led effort to reclaim these already-spent tax dollars would take weeks, if not months, with no guarantee of success.

Had House Republicans blocked the tax cut agreement, beginning January 1st, everyone's paycheck would have taken a hit – just as Christmas bills come due, and just as most Americans are struggling to make do in the worst recession since the Great Depression.

Without the tax cut agreement, low and middle income workers would get socked with increases in their tax rates and small businesses would suffer an economic sucker punch right when they

could have hired new employees or given long overdue pay raises.

Those who see the tax cut agreement as a glass half empty cite the deficit spending that the bill includes for extended unemployment benefits. I agree that deficit spending is fundamentally wrong and the reason our country is in a fiscal mess.

However, tackling overspending is something the new Republican House will address head-on come January.

I have never voted for increased taxes, nor would I ever avoid a vote to lower taxes on hardworking Americans and local job-creating small businesses. A December 16, Fox News poll indicated that Americans by a 2:1 margin support the tax cut agreement.

It's one of the few things most of the country can agree on, and it's a great foundation from which the new Republican House can launch a leaner, more accountable government come January.

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### **Cam Newton Honored by the House:**

On December 15, the U.S. House of Representatives voted 378 to 15 to honor Auburn University's Heisman-winning quarterback, Cam Newton. Along with the rest of the Alabama delegation, I was proud to be a cosponsor of House Resolution 1761, and I was pleased to see

it pass overwhelmingly.

As a supporter of the resolution, and as someone proud of the fact that the State of Alabama has generated back-to-back Heisman winners, I regret that I was unable to cast my vote for the resolution due to an unavoidable flight delay. I join all my Auburn friends in congratulating a truly outstanding athlete on a remarkable season.

During this special time of the year, I wish each and every one of you much happiness and joy.

My staff and I work for you. If we can ever be of service, do not hesitate to call my office toll free at 1-800-288-8721.