

I don't usually write about votes in the U.S. Senate, because so little ever seems to happen there under Democrat Leader Harry Reid's control. However, last week's Senate standoff over whether to extend the current payroll tax cut for millions of working Americans deserves special attention. It is but the latest example of how President Obama's political ambitions trump any desire to reach an agreement for the good of the country.

At issue is the fate of the current 2 percent payroll tax cut for 160 million American workers, which is due to expire by year's end. A year ago, in an effort to provide relief to struggling workers, Congress and the president authorized a temporary 2 percent reduction in federal withholdings from all workers' paychecks, lowering the withholding rate from 6.2 percent to 4.2 percent. The amount of tax savings ranges from several hundred to several thousand dollars a year, depending on income. These withholding taxes – which fund Social Security – are not paid by seniors or employers, only the nation's wage earners.

After shunning negotiations on the matter, the president flew back to Washington last week and laid a political ultimatum at the feet of Senate Republicans: either vote for an extension of the payroll tax break, or be labeled as only supporting the wealthy. The expiring payroll tax cut was not offset with spending reductions, and the president wants to fund an extension by raising taxes on many business owners. The Republican leadership in Congress supports cutting spending to pay for the tax cut extension, not raising taxes.

Back in September after the president introduced his jobs plan, House Speaker John Boehner offered him a detailed outline for federal spending cuts, tax relief and job growth, building on common ground. The president ignored this proposal, opting instead to hold political rallies where he continued to demagogue a "do nothing Congress."

The president's followers in Congress have chosen to walk away from any reasonable solution, just as they did during the deficit committee's recent deliberations. In effect, the president – with the compliance of the Democrat Majority Leader, Harry Reid – is holding the tax cut hostage to a political stunt.

The American people want Congress and the president to get to work and tackle our government's overspending. For the last year, the House has been busy writing and passing plans to reduce federal spending and reform the overly complex tax code. We've passed the

Paul Ryan budget, which would trim \$6.2 trillion in spending over the next decade, and we've passed at least 25 separate bills to spur job creation. Meanwhile, the only sound coming from the Senate and the White House has been that of crickets chirping amidst the jet wash of Air Force One headed off to yet another speaking tour to denounce House Republicans.

Mr. President, you were entrusted by the American people to demonstrate leadership. There has been no leadership from the White House, only obfuscation. Conservatives will continue to press for responsible spending and tax reform. We have bent over backwards to seek agreement, but we steadfastly refuse to jeopardize our core principles for the sake of comity or in support of continued failed administrative policy.

Holiday Cards for Heroes:

This Christmas, many loved ones will be spending the holidays far from home, patrolling the frontlines and performing missions that keep America safe.

I had the honor of visiting with some of them in Afghanistan just before Thanksgiving. While the men and women of the 1165th Military Police Company from Fairhope, now stationed in Afghanistan, will no doubt be hearing from their own families back home this season, the American Red Cross is asking everyone to take time to send a card to America's service members, no matter where they may be this Christmas. In fact, even if you don't have family and friends serving, you are encouraged to send a holiday card via the Red Cross.

The Holiday Mail for Heroes program, sponsored by the Red Cross, is calling on Americans to sign a card to our military and mail it to the Red Cross for shipment to the men and women of the Armed Forces in time for Christmas. To participate, you are asked to send a signed card, no letters or enclosures please, to: Holiday Mail For Heroes, P.O. Box 5456, Capitol Heights, MD 20791-5456.

Do not address the card to any particular service member since the holiday cards will be distributed to all our military personnel. Most important, you must postmark your card before this **Friday, December 9, 2011**. There is no limit to the number of cards you can send to our military.

For more information, visit: <http://www.redcross.org/holidaymail>.

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.

For release: December 5, 2011