

# The BLACK C o M M e n t a t o r

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## **Failure to Compromise The Other Side of the Tracks By Perry Redd BC Columnist**

If you listened to today's Republican Weekly Address that counters President Obama's message, like the ones before it during this Administration, you'd have thought someone missed the politically divisive events of the past year. Republican Rep. Allen West of Florida urged President Obama to work with lawmakers to help avert sequestration, calling the impending automatic cuts to defense a "dark cloud" which "hangs over our military." He forgot that the President already tried sitting down with Republicans, who then chose to obstruct anything he tried to accomplish.

I see this as a "boo-game" that Republicans are playing with the American public, without telling the whole story. You see, in politics, there's a negotiation tactic known as *compromise*, about which the Republicans act as if they have no knowledge. Known as "the party of no," Republicans have allowed their Tea Party wing to lead them onto this virtual fiscal cliff. Now it's time to jump. Since they refused to compromise with Democrats in tax hikes for the highest American incomes, in exchange for the budget cuts of which they're so proud, they are now saddled with the consequences of their recalcitrance.

Let me give you a point of fact that Rep. West left out: What sequestration *is*. **The Budget Control Act** established the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction to identify \$1.5 trillion in deficit reduction over the period of fiscal years (FYs) 2012-2021. The joint committee was simply charged with achieving deficit reduction with no restrictions on how they accomplish the net reductions in the deficit.

The Budget Control Act - or Sequestration - came up with the formula to get it done...since that's all the Republicans cried about.

The sequestration process is one in which across-the-board spending cuts are applied to government programs in order to meet a budgetary goal. A number of programs are exempt from sequestration by statute. Those programs not specifically exempted constitute what is considered to be the "sequester base." The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) is required by law to apply the spending cuts uniformly to all programs, projects, and activities within a budget account in the sequester base. So, the Republicans wanted budget cuts? They are now going to get them. So why is Allen West crying? Because the Republicans "pet project" - the Department of Defense - is going to shed some skin in this beef too!

"I spent 22 years in active duty service in the United States Army and served in several combat zones. I cannot understate the amount of damage these cuts would do to our military," said West (a retired Army officer) in the Republican Weekly Address. Because of war, death and destruction, West made a living.

West said the cuts would "hollow out" the nation's military forces leaving the country with "the smallest ground force since 1940, the smallest Navy since 1915, and the smallest tactical fighter force in the history of the modern United States Air Force." But what he didn't say is that the U.S. still has the biggest of everything he named: greatest amount of ground forces than any other nation; more ships than any other nation and more tactical fighting forces than any nation on earth! Even if the cuts take place...since we are an increasingly technological fighting machine now, we need less and less of the stuff we used to use - just like corporate America is doing with low-wage workers! No need for cashiers when you've got automated self-check-out kiosks!

Something else West failed to say: that his Republican-supporting corporations would shed some skin too when the cuts take place. Funny how he left that out when talking to the American public. Lockheed-Martin, a grand recipient of "government welfare," would feel these defense cuts that West is talking about. West defends them, but neglects to defend cuts to the poor. He didn't say that the cuts were fair - thus "across-the-board" is the most equitable solution in an unfair political climate.

Of Lockheed-Martin's \$1.927 million in political contributions, 62% went to Republicans. They've spent over \$3.9 million in lobbying thus far this year. Honeywell International, another aerospace/defense products and services provider spent \$2.2 million, with 63% of its contributions going to Republicans.

The Florida lawmaker pressed the Obama administration to accept a Republican proposal for avoiding the impending cuts, and said Obama had shown a "failure to lead." Lead what? President Obama offered the Republicans four dollars in cuts to just one dollar in tax hikes - on the richest American wage earners - and Republicans quickly rejected it. How's offering someone a gift horse a "failure to lead?"

The disingenuous language that misleads the American public on highly important issues is what the Republican Party has become known for. Bogus re-writes of history are dark marks on our supposed American values. Just know that the sequestration cuts will work out just fine, for the right reasons, at the right time. If Republicans don't want to work "across the aisle," then someone else will work it out for them. When Republicans fail to compromise, that exemplifies their failure to lead.

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