

If It Ain't Broke, Break It

Written by Rep. Keith Ellison | The Nation
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Last week, Speaker Boehner described the Senate deal for extending middle-class tax cuts and unemployment benefits as acceptable. This past Saturday, eighty-nine senators—including the vast majority of Republican Senators—voted for the bipartisan compromise to extend unemployment benefits and a middle-class payroll tax cut for two months.

No sooner did the Tea Party House Republicans begin to fear that this good faith compromise just might succeed than they stepped forward and smashed the deal. Within a few hours, Speaker Boehner went from saying the Senate compromise was “a good deal” and “a victory” to saying, “It’s become clear that what the Senate did pass is going to cause job creators all kinds of problems.”

What happened? The anti-government ideologues happened.

The Tea Partiers rejected the deal their leader blessed—knowing full well the Senate would not capitulate to their demand—and thereby risking the livelihood of 160 million Americans who depend on the extension of unemployment benefits and payroll tax cuts.

These are the Grover Norquist disciples who want to “drown government in the bathtub,” as Norquist, whose pledge they’ve all signed, famously said. Why? Because if they actually *let* government work, then people could have faith that government *can* work.

In short, when your entire philosophy is that government is the problem, you make government the problem. Even conservative economists agree that unemployment benefits *create* jobs by allowing consumers to spend more money. Yet this conflicts with the Republicans’

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predetermined ideology that no government action can help. Broad majorities agree that having millionaires pay their fair share in taxes would reduce our deficit and allow us to invest in jobs. But apparently no amount of evidence can convince Republicans that our government can be part of the solution.

The Republican philosophy goes something like this: if you take your car to the mechanic and instead of fixing it, they take out the engine and charge you an arm and a leg, you should conclude that mechanics can't fix cars and you should probably just take yours to the junkyard and sell it for scrap metal.

But the truth is—you probably just hired a bad mechanic.

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