

No shutdown, no default: Congress leaders, Obama back deal

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AP Photo/Lauren Victoria Burke
Outgoing House Speaker John Boehner of Ohio talks with reporters on Capitol Hill on Tuesday.

"I don't want (Paul Ryan) to walk into a dirty barn full of you-know-what. So I've done my best to try to clean it up."

— John Boehner, Republican, Outgoing Republican Speaker of the House

WASHINGTON — Striving to end a cycle of crisis, congressional leaders and the White House united Tuesday behind an ambitious budget and debt deal aimed at restoring a semblance of order to Capitol Hill and ending the threat of government shutdowns until well after a new president takes office.

The outgoing House speaker, Republican John Boehner of Ohio, prepared to push the deal through his unruly chamber on Wednesday as his last act before departing Congress at the end of the week.

All but forced to resign under conservative pressure, Boehner was nonetheless going out on his own terms. The budget deal stands as an in-your-face rebuttal to his headline antagonists, on Capitol Hill and off, who angrily oppose spending increases and compromises with Democratic President Barack Obama.

They seethed but acknowledged they were powerless to stop an agreement all but certain to pass with votes from Democrats and a sizable number of Republicans. Boehner brushed off their complaints, declaring that he intended to make good on his promise to leave a "clean barn" for his successor, Paul Ryan of Wisconsin, who is set to get the GOP nomination for speaker on Wednesday and win election on the House floor the day after that.

"I didn't want him to walk into a dirty barn full of you-know-what. So I've done my best to try to clean it up," a good-humored Boehner told reporters after a closed-door gathering of House Republicans, his last such weekly meeting after

nearly five years as speaker and a quarter-century on Capitol Hill.

During the meeting, Republican lawmakers had a parting gift for Boehner: a golf cart with Ohio license plates reading "MR SPKR".

Boehner told them he had a gift in return: the budget deal.

The deal would boost military spending as sought by defense hawks, even as it would take away the threat of "fiscal cliffs" by a GOP-led Congress in the middle of a campaign season where Republicans are aiming for the White House and trying to hang onto their slim Senate majority.

Struck over recent days in closely held talks with White House officials and top House and Senate leader of both parties, the agreement would raise the government debt ceiling until March 2017, removing the threat of an unprecedented and market-rupturing national default just days from now.

At the same time it would set the budget of the govern-

ment through the 2016 and 2017 fiscal years and ease punishing spending caps by providing \$80 billion more for military and domestic programs, paid for with a hodge-podge of spending cuts and revenue increases touching areas from tax compliance to spectrum auctions.

The deal would also avert a looming shortfall in the Social Security disability trust fund that threatened to slash benefits, and head off an unprecedented increase in Medicare premiums for outpatient care for about 15 million beneficiaries.

The White House welcomed the agreement.

"No one got everything they wanted," said Vice President Joe Biden. "But it will last for two years, and it will prevent us from lurching from crisis to crisis."

Congressional Democrats have pushed for months for such a deal, bottling up routine spending bills in an effort to produce negotiations that would result in increased domestic spending.

Budget deal would cut popular crop insurance program

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The two-year budget deal produces savings from one of the most popular programs in farm country — federally subsidized crop insurance — and farm state lawmakers are furious.

Senators and House members said Tuesday they weren't notified of the cut before the deal was struck, with Republican leaders pushing for a vote this week on the budget pact. The crop insurance companies that depend on federal subsidies said in a statement that the proposed \$3 billion in cuts over 10 years could be devastating to the industry.

Budget-writers in Washington have long eyed the crop insurance program, which costs more than \$9 billion annually, as a pot of available money. But farm-state lawmakers have fought to protect it, saying it makes more sense than other farm subsidies since it pays out when farmers suffer losses.

Congress got rid of other types of subsidies in a wide-ranging farm bill last year, including payments that went to farmers regardless of crop yield or crop price. In turn, they increased federal support for crop insurance.

The budget deal would create the savings by lowering the rate of return for companies that sell crop insurance to farmers. The federal government partially subsidizes those companies and insures some losses.

The Republican chairmen of the House and Senate Agriculture Committees, Texas Rep. Mike Conaway and Kansas Sen. Pat Roberts, issued a joint statement along with the top Democrats on the panels objecting to the cuts, which they said would "undermine a critical risk-management tool for American agriculture producers and consumers."

Both said they would vote against the bill. Roberts told his

colleagues at a Senate Republican caucus lunch Tuesday that his panel was "shut out." He said that chipping away at crop insurance could mean that farmers have to depend on Congress to approve emergency spending for farmers when they suffer large-scale losses.

"Agriculture producers are battling floods while others continue to face ongoing and severe drought," Roberts said. "Crop insurance has kept them in business in a tough economy and eliminated the need for a costly emergency federal disaster package."

Still, Roberts did not go as far as to say he would try and block the budget deal over the issue. He said he hoped that lawmakers could find a different way to meet the same savings before Congress writes a final budget at the end of this year.

"Maybe we can achieve the same goal by a different path," Roberts said.

BRIEFLY

GM recalling 1.4M cars; oil leaks can cause engine fires

DETROIT (AP) — General Motors issued its third recall in seven years for cars that can leak oil and catch fire, in some instances damaging garages and homes.

The recall, which covers 1.4 million vehicles dating to 1997, is needed because repairs from the first two recalls didn't work. More than 1,300 cars caught fire after they were fixed by dealers, the company said.

A valve cover gasket can degrade over time, allowing oil to seep out. Under hard braking, oil drops can fall onto the exhaust manifold and catch fire. Flames can spread to a plastic spark plug wire channel and the rest of the engine.

GM says it has reports of 19 minor injuries in fires caused by the cars. The company is finalizing a fix for the latest recall, and will use state registration databases in an effort to track down the owners and notify them by mail, said spokesman Alan Adler.

In the previous recalls, in 2008 and 2009, GM told owners to park the cars outside until repairs can be made since most of the fires happened shortly after drivers turned off the engines. Adler said he doesn't know if GM will make the same recommendation again.

The latest recall, mainly in North America, includes: the 1997-2004 Pontiac Grand Prix and Buick Regal; the 2000-2004 Chevrolet Impala; the 1998 and 1999 Chevrolet Lumina and Oldsmobile Intrigue; and the 1998-2004

Chevrolet Monte Carlo. All have 3.8-liter V6 engines.

Air Force picks Northrop Grumman to build next bomber

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Air Force said Tuesday it chose Northrop Grumman Corp., maker of the B-2 stealth bomber, to build its next-generation bomber, a highly classified, \$80 billion project designed to replace the aging bomber fleet with an aircraft that eventually may be capable of flying without a pilot aboard.

The loser of the high-stakes bidding contest was a team formed by Boeing Co. and Lockheed Martin Corp. The new bomber will meet the nation's long-range strike aircraft needs for the next 50 years.

Walgreens buying Rite Aid, creating drugstore giant

NEW YORK (AP) — Walgreens is buying rival Rite Aid for about \$9.41 billion in cash, creating a drugstore giant with nearly 18,000 stores around the world.

The deal combines the largest and third-largest U.S. drugstore chains, based on store counts. And it makes one of the world's largest pharmaceutical buyers even bigger at a time when other key health care players like insurers and drugmakers also are expanding through multi-billion dollar deals.

Walgreens said it will pay \$9 for each share of Rite Aid Corp. That's a 48 percent premium to Rite Aid's closing price of \$6.08 Monday. Shares of both companies jumped Tuesday after The Wall Street Journal first reported the deal.

The companies said the deal is worth \$17.2 billion, when debt is included.

Walgreens Boots Alliance Inc. has more than 13,100 stores around the world. Rite Aid, which is based in Camp Hill, Pennsylvania, has more than 4,600 stores in the U.S.

The companies expect the deal to close in the second



AP Photo/Charles Krupa, File
Walgreens confirmed Tuesday that it will buy rival Rite Aid, creating a drugstore giant with nearly 18,000 stores around the world.

half of next year, although given that it is combining the No. 1 and No. 3 players in its industry, it could draw close scrutiny from anti-trust regulators.

It comes less than year after Walgreens bought European health and beauty retailer Alliance Boots. Besides its namesake stores, Deerfield, Illinois-based Walgreens also owns Duane Reade stores in the U.S.

A combination with Rite Aid will give Walgreens addi-



tional purchasing power in negotiating prices with drug companies, a hot topic given the rapid rise in cost for some prescriptions.

Adding Rite Aid's stores could also help Walgreens lower price for its customers because its growing volume of prescriptions would put it in a better position in talks with drug providers.

Rite Aid stores will initially keep its name after the deal closes, Walgreens said, but that may change over time.

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Celebrate Your Loved Ones in Our **Veterans Day SALUTE**

Honoring those who have served and those that are currently serving our country!

Bring us a picture of your servicemen or servicewomen or veteran by **November 5th** along with the form below and we will include them in our "Veterans Day Salute" on November 11th in the East Oregonian and Hermiston Herald at no charge.

For more information, call Paula at 1-800-522-0255 or Hermiston Herald at 541-564-4530.

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Your Phone Number _____ Pendleton, OR | Hermiston, OR

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Veterans Day Tribute

They've served our country with courage and honor. They've left behind loved ones to risk their lives in protecting their country. They've defended our freedoms and ideals. They make us proud to be Americans.

Join us for Veterans Day, Wednesday, November 11, 2015 in the East Oregonian and Hermiston Herald, as we honor the men and women of the U.S. Military. Their courage, hard work and sacrifice are the backbone of our nation, protecting freedom, liberty, justice and all we hold dear.

Bring in or call 1-800-522-0255 with a photo and message to your hero to give them a special thanks.

DEADLINE
Wednesday, November 5th


For more information call Paula at 541-278-2678 or 1-800-522-0255 or Hermiston Herald at 541-564-4530.

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