



# The Top 12 House Votes Against the Middle Class

Conservative Leaders Put the 1 Percent  
Before the 99 Percent Time and Again

February 2012

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## Introduction

A detailed examination of the votes cast in the House of Representatives during the first session of the 112th Congress reveals that the conservative leadership of the chamber and their backbench Tea Party firebrands voted 279 times against the interests of American middle-class families. We can't list all 279 of the votes, but we composed a list below of the most egregious ones.

These votes are emblematic of the scant concerns conservatives in the House have for our embattled middle class. Unfortunately for them the public is beginning to notice. The American people have begun to express increased dissatisfaction with House Republicans. Here's why.

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## Repealing the Affordable Care Act

### *Vote*

**Repeal of the Affordable Care Act (H.R. 2):** House Vote 14. Adopted 245–189: Republicans 242–0; Democrats 3–189 on January 19, 2011

### *Purpose*

This bill called for repealing the Affordable Care Act, which ensures that 32 million people will gain insurance coverage, addresses rising health care costs, and includes important consumer protections against discriminatory insurance practices such as denying coverage to those with pre-existing conditions or charging higher rates based on a patient's sex, race, or age. The proposed House bill would restore the provisions of the law amended or repealed by the Affordable Care Act and repeals certain provisions of the health care reconciliation law without offering an alternative to help the middle

class cope with ever-rising health care costs. (see the Center for American Progress analysis on the [consequences of repealing the Affordable Care Act](#)) The Democratic Senate has vowed to protect the Affordable Care Act.

#### *Vote*

**Repeal of Essential Health Care Benefits Section of the Affordable Care Act (H.R. 1 Amendment 430):** House Vote [141](#). Adopted 239–183: Republicans 235–2; Democrats 4–181 on February 19, 2011

#### *Purpose*

This amendment would have barred funds made available in the Affordable Care Act from being used by the departments of Health and Human Services, Labor, or Treasury for issuing regulations or guidelines defining “essential benefits” as directed by the Affordable Care Act. According to the law, all health plans offered in individual and small-group markets, including Medicaid state plans, must include items and services within at least 10 categories—known as essential health benefits—by 2014.

The categories are: ambulatory patient services; emergency services; hospitalization; maternity and newborn care; mental health and substance use disorder services, including behavioral health treatment; prescription drugs; rehabilitative and habilitative services and devices; laboratory services; preventive and wellness services, and chronic disease management; and pediatric services, including oral and vision care.

If repealed, middle-class families in need of affordable insurance coverage would once again be at the mercy of insurance companies, which could structure benefit plans to attract only the healthiest patients—leaving those who need medical coverage without necessary insurance.

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## Gutting Medicare and Medicaid

#### *Vote*

**Adoption of the Ryan Budget (House Concurrent Resolution 34):** House Vote [277](#). Adopted 235–193: Republicans 235–4; Democrats 0–189 on April 15, 2011

#### *Purpose*

The budget proposed by Rep. Paul Ryan (R-WI) would have converted Medicaid into a block-grant program run by individual states and would have turned Medicare into a “premium support system” for those younger than 55—both moves that would sharply raise health care costs for middle-class families. (see the Center for American Progress analysis on the [Ryan Budget](#)) The legislation also called for consolidating the current six tax brackets to benefit the wealthy at the expense of the middle class.

According to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, the Ryan voucher plan for Medicare would force a typical 65-year-old to pay 68 percent of his or her total cost of coverage, including premiums, deductibles, and other out-of-pocket costs. (see the Center for American Progress analysis on proposals to turn Medicare into a premium support system)

Similarly, the Ryan plan for Medicaid would have drastic consequences. According to the CBO, “states would face significant challenges in achieving sufficient cost savings through efficiencies to mitigate the loss of federal funding.” Indeed, the CBO said that “to maintain current service levels in the Medicaid program, states would probably need to consider additional changes, such as reducing their spending on other programs or raising additional revenues. Alternatively, states could reduce the size of their Medicaid programs by cutting payment rates for doctors, hospitals, or nursing homes; reducing the scope of benefits covered; or limiting eligibility.”

House Republicans considered all of these changes so that conservatives in Congress could cut corporate taxes and lower the top individual tax rate to 25 percent from the current 35 percent level for the wealthiest Americans. The tax cuts for the wealthy were so large that even with the massive spending cuts in the Ryan budget, it would almost certainly have caused taxes to go up on the middle class to make the numbers add up. (see the Center for American Progress analysis of the Ryan Budget) This vote was soundly defeated in the Democratic Senate.

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## Scrapping consumer product safety

### *Vote*

**Fiscal 2011 Continuing Appropriations, Consumer Product Safety Database (H.R. 1):** House Vote 137. Adopted in Committee of the Whole: 234–187, Republicans 227–10; Democrats 7–177 on February 19, 2011

### *Purpose*

This amendment would have barred the use of funds made available to implement the consumer product safety information database established under the Consumer Product Safety Act. In March 2011 the Consumer Product Safety Commission established the SaferProducts.gov database to provide all Americans with safety information on products they have bought or will consider buying. Rachel Weintraub, director of product safety for the Consumer Federation of America, argued Republicans were “trying to pull the plug on a vital consumer resource.”

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## Abandoning homeowners

### *Vote*

**HAMP Termination (H.R. 839):** House Vote 198. Adopted 252–170: Republicans 234–2; Democrats 18–168 on March 29, 2011

### *Purpose*

This bill would terminate the Treasury Department’s authority to provide new assistance under the Home Affordable Modification Program, which provides financial incentives to mortgage servicing companies to support reductions in borrowers’ monthly payments. This bill harms the several hundred thousand Americans still reeling from the housing market collapse. Many mortgage companies and banks sold risky mortgages to homeowners. By canceling this program there would inevitably be more foreclosures, given the fragile state of the nation’s housing market. (see the Center for American Progress report on ways the administration can build off the HAMP program)

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## Fouling our air and drinking water

### *Vote*

**EPA Greenhouse Gas Regulation (H.R. 910):** House Vote 249. Adopted 255–172: Republicans 236–0; Democrats 19–172 on April 7, 2011

### *Purpose*

This bill would prohibit the Environmental Protection Agency, or EPA, from regulating greenhouse gases in any effort to address climate change. It would amend the Clean Air Act to strike specific elements from the definition of an “air pollutant” unless regulation of those chemicals is not used in an attempt to address climate change. It also would clarify that the bill does not limit the authority of a state to regulate the emission of a greenhouse gas unless the regulation attempts to address climate change. This bill would harm all Americans. Greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide are emitted from power plants, industrial facilities, and other sources, and released into the atmosphere. As these gases linger in the atmosphere, they trap heat radiating back from Earth, and the surface temperature of our planet rises. The rise in temperature causes rising sea levels, increased rainfall, floods, drought, wildfires, and severe storms, which not only harm our environment but also hurt our economy. (see the Center for American Progress analysis as to why the EPA must be allowed to regulate greenhouse gases)

### *Vote*

**Commercial Boiler Emissions (H.R. 2250):** House Vote 791. Adopted 275–142: Republicans 234–0; Democrats 41–142 on October 13, 2011

### *Purpose*

The bill would nullify certain EPA emissions standards for commercial and industrial boilers and other related equipment. It would require the agency to repropose and finalize the rules 15 months after the bill's enactment and would require the EPA to allow affected plants at least five years to comply after the regulations become effective. This bill essentially puts the interests of polluters over that of the health and safety of American families. It creates enormous uncertainty and goes far beyond providing the EPA with extra time to finalize their rulemaking. More troubling, this bill would delay and could substantially weaken long-overdue public health protections by allowing the continued emissions of carcinogens and other toxic air pollutants that can cause developmental harm and other serious health effects. (see the Center for American Progress report on how [clean energy investments](#) can create jobs and protect the environment)

### *Vote*

**Water Pollution Regulatory Authority—Passage (H.R. 2018):** House Vote [573](#). Adopted 239–184: Republicans 223–13; Democrats 16–171 on July 13, 2011

### *Purpose*

This bill would prohibit EPA from issuing a new or revised water-quality standard when a state standard has been approved by the agency, unless the state agrees that a new or revised standard is necessary to meet Clean Water Act requirements. It also would prohibit EPA from withdrawing approval of a state program for issuing water-quality permits or limiting federal financial assistance if EPA disagrees with state water-quality standards or the implementation of federal guidance. It would allow states to assume and administer parts of a water-permitting program, rather than all or none of it. This bill would do great harm to all Americans if ever enacted. According to the [EPA](#), this bill would fundamentally alter the current federal/state relationship outlined in the Clean Water Act and would hinder the federal government's ability to ensure there is an equitable level of protection provided to our nation's waters. Worse yet, the bill hinders federal and state government efforts to use greater scientific information on the impact of pollution to human health and the environment. (see the Center for American Progress report on why [investments in water infrastructure](#) are needed now more than ever)

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## Guaranteeing more job losses

### *Vote*

**Cut, Cap, and Balance—Passage (H.R. 2560):** House Vote [606](#). Adopted 234–190: Republicans 229–9; Democrats 5–181 on July 19, 2011

### *Purpose*

This bill made an increase in the federal debt limit contingent upon the passage of a balanced-budget constitutional amendment. It also would set fiscal year 2012 discretion-

ary spending at a dangerously low level. The bill, if enacted, would drastically undercut the federal government's ability to meet its core commitments to seniors, middle-class families, and the most vulnerable. According to an [analysis](#) by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, the "Cut, Cap, and Balance Act" would require cuts totaling \$111 billion immediately, despite a persistently high unemployment rate. According to the analysis, cuts at that level equal roughly 0.7 percent of the projected GDP for fiscal year 2012. A cut that size could cause the loss of roughly 700,000 jobs, relative to what the number of jobs otherwise would be. (see the Center for American Progress report on the conservative [plan to cap spending](#))

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## Encouraging financial fraud

### *Vote*

Consumer Financial Protection Bureau Overhaul—Passage (H.R. 1315): House Vote [621](#). Adopted 241–173: Republicans 231–1; Democrats 10–172 on July 21, 2011

### *Purpose*

Passage of the bill would replace the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's director with a five-member commission. It also would lower the vote threshold required for the Financial Stability Oversight Council to override Consumer Financial Protection Bureau rules from two-thirds to a simple majority and would allow the council to override regulations that threaten the stability of individual institutions. According to Financial Services Committee [Democrats](#):

*The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) is a very important part of the Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act, as the title of the bill makes clear.*

*Until passage of that Act, consumer protection in financial matters was in the hands of regulators who consistently treated consumer protection as a second class concern. Creating an independent bureau was intended to ensure that consumer interests are fully considered on the merits and not relegated to an afterthought. H.R. 1315 would reverse this by restoring the prudential regulators' authority over consumer protection by providing that the Financial Stability Oversight Council (FSOC) could overrule, by majority vote, a CFPB regulation on any policy ground it deems appropriate. This would take away the very independence of the CFPB that the law intended to establish.*

(see the Center for American Progress report on [why the appointment](#) of the CFPB director was crucial)

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## Destroying labor unions

### *Vote*

**National Labor Relations Board Powers (H.R. 2587):** House Vote 711. Adopted 238–186: Republicans 230–7; Democrats 8–179 on September 15, 2011

### *Purpose*

This bill would prevent the National Labor Relations Board from ordering a company to reinstate production or make certain investments at a given location. The bill also would prohibit the board from blocking a firm’s decision to relocate and would apply the prohibitions to all complaints that have not received final adjudication by the time the bill is enacted. This bill would harm America’s middle class. According to House Democrats, the bill would be “devastating to workers across this country. It will make it easier to ship jobs overseas, provide employers with a loophole for firing workers who try to organize a union, make runaway shops legal for all intents and purposes, and create a new race to the bottom for American workers’ rights, wages, benefits and working conditions.” (see the Center for American Progress report on why unions make the middle class)

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## Endangering infants

### *Vote*

**Cement Plant Emissions, Brain Development Impact (.H.R 2681):** House Vote 747. Rejected in Committee of the Whole 166–246: Republicans 6–234; Democrats 160–12 on October 5, 2011

### *Purpose*

Amendment 11 called on the EPA to delay implementation of current proposed cement plant emissions standards, if such emissions harm brain development or cause learning disabilities in infants or children. House Republicans placed appeasing their base above protecting the health and safety of children. According to one press report, “[t]he cement rules would require more than 90 percent reductions in mercury and other harmful emissions. Mercury can impair the brain development of fetuses and young children. The EPA estimates it would cost the industry nearly \$1 billion to clean up the air pollution but says the new standards could save up to 2,500 lives and avert thousands of asthma attacks when implemented in 2013.” (see the Center for American Progress analysis of the true cost of the GOP’s antiregulatory agenda)

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## Cutting benefits for out-of-work Americans

### *Vote*

**GOP Payroll Tax/Unemployment Insurance Extensions Package (H.R. 3630):** House Vote 923, Passed 234–193: Republicans 224–14; Democrats 10–179 on December 13, 2011

### *Purpose*

This bill would have extended jobless benefits for some of the unemployed while reducing the maximum number of weeks of benefits that a worker could receive unemployment insurance. Under the GOP's bill, states would have required individuals seeking jobless benefits to be drug tested and would have required most people receiving benefits to be searching for work and pursuing education credentials if they did not have a high school diploma. It also called for blocking certain air pollution rules for industrial boilers and incinerators; freezing the pay of many federal employees through 2013; increasing Medicare premiums for affluent beneficiaries; and eliminating more than \$20 billion of spending planned under the Affordable Care Act.

This bill would be devastating to working families all across the country. Many laid-off Americans would risk slipping into poverty because of the restrictions on unemployment insurance benefits in this bill. The bill also freezes the pay of federal employees, blocks important EPA regulations, and reduces spending on the Affordable Care Act. (see the Center for American Progress [state-by-state analysis](#) of the impact of the payroll tax cut)

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## Conclusion

The House record is clear. From voting to put insurance companies above families to gutting clean air and water rules, the current majority has proven who they work for. Fortunately for America's middle-class families, none of these proposals will even be signed into law.

The American public is losing faith in the House leadership. It's clear why.

*(The Source for the votes was Congressional Quarterly and the Library of Congress)*