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Time for Cooler Heads and Warmer Hearts

Just when Congress was on the verge of a bipartisan and bicameral agreement to do something positive for people who are hungry and in need of assistance in local communities across America, the White House issued a statement saying that President Obama's "senior advisors would recommend that he veto" the [*Supporting America's Charities Act \(H.R. 5806\)*](#), which would restore and make three charitable giving incentives permanent. In the House, some Democrats are considering a no vote on this previously bipartisan, common sense legislation.

Really?

It is inconceivable that our President – the former community organizer who understands the plight of the hungry, ran on a platform of ending partisanship, and has vetoed only two bills during his six years in office – would veto a bipartisan bill that is designed to help Americans help their neighbors.

Therefore, it would seem that the advisors' threat to urge the President to violate his own values and veto this needed bill was the result of one of two causes. Either the veto recommendation was made out of lack of understanding that the larger so-called "one-year" extenders bill that the House passed last week provides only a couple of weeks of relief for charitable nonprofits. Or it was the result of knee-jerk

partisanship. Neither is acceptable.

One Year Is Only a Couple of Weeks

That “one-year” retroactive extenders package with 55 provisions certainly helps for-profit businesses and individual taxpayers for a full year; a for-profit business that spent money on research last summer can retroactively take a credit, and individuals can deduct local and state taxes they paid last spring.

But extending the expired charitable giving incentives is of little value to the work of charitable nonprofits, because the incentives would be helpful for only a couple of weeks: from the time the President signs that bill until the end of the year. The concept of “retroactive incentives” is an oxymoron that doesn’t fit in the charitable context:

- Fresh produce and meat that was available on loading docks last March can’t retroactively be donated next week to feed hungry Americans.
- Older Americans can’t retroactively donate money they’ve already spent out of their Individual Retirement Accounts, having not waited all year to find out whether Congress would finally restore the expired giving incentive.
- Those wanting to donate land to protect the environment for future generations certainly need more than a couple of weeks to arrange for lawyers, surveyors, and more to pull together all the paperwork.

That’s why a separate bill was needed to take these needed incentives for charitable giving out of the annual on-again/off-again partisan fray and provide certainty into the future. Republican House Ways & Means Chairman Dave Camp and the Democratic Senate Finance Committee Chairman Ron Wyden – who have battled each other earlier over other matters – decided at the end of this congressional session to unite on a bipartisan basis to provide real relief in local communities through the *Supporting America’s Charities Act* (H.R. 5806). These leaders should be commended for agreeing to agree, for a change that benefits all of our communities.

Why would any Representative oppose something that will help their communities?

Some claim that they’ve already passed an extenders bill. But this is no mere “check-the-box” exercise.

As shown, the so-called “one-year” extenders package is flawed when dealing with charitable giving incentives. Real people in communities will be hurt by blocking these key provisions.

Some ask, “why these provisions and not others?” It is because these provisions go to the heart of our communities and are non-controversial. There is broad support on both sides of the aisle. Trying to include more has already failed repeatedly in this Congress. Blocking something good at the very end of the session because something even better could not be achieved is not leadership.

Or perhaps the partisan rancor is so entrenched that politics comes before people. I hope that’s not the case. Nonprofits are the nonpartisan sector. It would be a shame to treat people in communities, and the overextended nonprofits assisting them, as pawns in a partisan political game. *Especially* when [56 House Democrats joined with 221 Republicans in voting for a similar bill on a bipartisan basis](#) last summer.

Delay in making any of these giving incentives serves no public or policy goal, but limits the ability of nonprofits to achieve their missions, whether through feeding people who are hungry, conserving land for future generations, or addressing myriad other needs in communities across America.

We call on Congress and the White House advisors to work for the American people with cooler heads and warmer hearts. Do the right thing by supporting America’s charities in serving their local communities. Vote for and sign H.R. 5806, the *Supporting America’s Charities Act*.