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More on government shutdown

Pat Perriello | Oct. 7, 2013 NCR Today

I want to recommend two excellent editorials from *The Baltimore Sun* on the government shutdown: "The unproductive shutdown [1]" and "Government shutdown is the Republicans' fault -- period [2]."

Media always feel the need to be even-handed. When they do a story, they have to have one member from each party, and in so doing, essentially validate what each person has to say, giving them equal weight or value. Yet their positions are often not of equal value, and I think these editorials point out that this is one case where it is clear where the blame lies. This is not to say both parties have not at times been guilty of obfuscation, deception and out-and-out wrongdoing. In this case, however, I agree with both editorials that it is clear where the blame lies.

I actually don't think Republicans as a party are altogether responsible for the government shutdown. In that sense, I would not go as far as Thomas Schaller does in his editorial. It is a small group of House Republicans and their current leader, Sen. Ted Cruz, who are responsible. The question is, why is Speaker John Boehner allowing them to set the agenda? The answer seems to be the fear that almost every house Republican has: An even more conservative opponent may be waiting in the next primary election. Once again, the problem created by state gerrymandering of House districts proves a significant obstacle to democratic government.

The House has tacked on a defunding "Obamacare" rider to a continuing resolution to fund the government at existing levels for six to eight weeks. Schaller explains that they are ignoring proper legislative procedures. He gives examples of what could happen if one party could use such tactics to hold the government hostage over a law they don't like. Democrats might have decided to end the Bush-era tax cuts or repeal the Patriot Act. There is a legislative procedure for amending or repealing unpopular laws, but this isn't it.

We are already beginning to see the pain this government shutdown is having on individuals and families. The upcoming debt ceiling crisis looms with suggestions that this same group of Republicans intends to continue to hold the government hostage. Congress has a responsibility to keep the government operating and to pay bills it already incurred. That is made clear in the Constitution. The failure and refusal of this small group of Republicans to do so is irresponsible and demonstrates a failure to govern.

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[1] http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/opinion/editorial/bs-ed-shutdown-20131001,0,7737959.story
[2] http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/opinion/oped/bs-ed-schaller-government-shutdown-20131001,0,682998.column