

Obama, the Obstructionist 112th U.S. Congress and Tea Party Adamantine: A Political Spectacle

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Abstract

The authors present a brief summary on U.S. democracy and two main functions of ideology—representation of sectional interests and ideological hegemony—to analyze the current U.S. political spectacle between President Barack Obama and the obstructionist 112th Congressional Republicans (GOP). When the 112th Congress gained power during the 2010 elections, the Republican Senate minority leader Mitch McConnell declared it was his main task to make Obama a one-term president. Although this analysis shows that America has had 21 months of private sector-growth in jobs, the GOP keeps a negative job narrative against Obama alive, giving the American people the impression that Obama's policies are a failure

Key Words: Ideology, hegemony, domination, obstructionism, power elite, egalitarianism, liberty, populism

1. Introduction

The American people took a bold step when they elected the first black U.S. president, and the world rejoiced with them. But did Americans expect a black president presiding over a white-ruled society could change a centuries-old infrastructure that was socially, economically, legally, and politically constructed by the power elite where “power, privilege, and the shaping of cultural consciousness” have become a bureaucratic monolith in the political thought and action of individuals?¹ Many politicians benefit from the way this centuries-old infrastructure operates because this current infrastructure benefits their interests, which is one reason the 112th Congress obstructs Obama's presidential agenda. The power elite “resist change that would reduce their power, status, and financial resources and the strategies they use to maintain the cooperation,” of conservative-minded American citizens which furthers their interests.²

Change means altering statues, administrative regulations, rules, and laws that would not be politically enforced if such changes go against the interests and practices of the power elite.³ Changes to old practices that “maintain established inequalities” between the working class, the middle class, and the power elite are resisted at all cost, another reason the conservative right is adamant about using eliminationist rhetoric against Obama.⁴ Obama cannot make major changes to the infrastructure without the full cooperation and agreement of Congress. The U.S. Constitution requires both the President and Congress to work together. With respect to the Constitution, it is based on intellectual tools and ideas from the 18th century Enlightenment thinkers. Given today's current state of political affairs, these tools and ideas have proven inadequate because politicians and Constitutional scholars interpret the Constitution differently. President Obama and the Congressional Republicans are constantly in gridlock over every piece of legislation the President introduces to Congress from affordable healthcare to payroll taxes for the middle class and the wealthiest two percent to his jobs act.

This paper focuses on the obstructionist behavior of established Republicans politicians and the Tea Party adamantine. Using two functions of ideology, this paper also focuses on the social welfare of the American people who are trapped by this political spectacle.

2. American Democracy: A Brief Summary

Henry Louis “H. L.” Mencken writes that “under democracy one party always devotes its chief energies to trying to prove that the other party is unfit to rule and both commonly succeed, and are right.” Aristotle, the Greek philosopher, chooses democracy over other forms of government, such as oligarchy, monarchy, communism, totalitarianism, fascism, etc. But he also recognizes that political ideologies can sever the bonds between men and the kind of government they prefer. For Aristotle, democracy is derived from the people’s will, people with power to tell their government how they wish to be served. It is argued that “America ‘invented’ democracy. It is an understatement to say America invented democracy, but America has created freedom, justice, and liberty for those who seek religious freedom. In the democratic realm, representative government is America’s proudest achievement, but few Americans exercise their rights to participate in this government that is of the people.”⁵ The United States has built her political system on democratic principles, and the American people have accepted the basic assumptions that these principles should govern and guide us politically, economically, socially, and legally. However, the framers have penned these taken-for-granted principles in the U.S. Constitution. Aristotle defines a constitution “as a way of organizing the offices of the nation-state, particularly the sovereign office.

The constitution thus defines the governing body, which takes different forms, for example, in a democracy it is the people.”⁶ But what many American citizens have experienced recently in U.S. politics falls short of what the practice of democracy truly is. For many American citizens, democracy is an illusion and is enjoyed only by a few, the most powerful and elite members of U.S. society. Should we then question the basic assumptions of what we consider a democratic society? With this said, what are the basic assumptions of a democratic society that Americans have come to accept? Walter Laqueur argues that a democratic “government should reflect the people’s will and the people’s choice, where the constitutional provision of regular elections, by secret ballot, with representatives of at least two parties standing for elections. Citizens, therefore, have the right to combine to achieve common aims, provided these aims do not jeopardize the rights of others.”⁷ Second, there should be a ‘Rule of Law’ where there is “no imprisonment or restriction of a citizen’s liberty without a fair trial.”⁸ But American citizens have been imprisoned on false charges, resulting in their liberty being taken away from them for many years, until the advent of DNA proved their innocence.

Finally, there should be a “Separation of Powers.”⁹ Since America’s political system is a democratic one, the Judiciary and Executive branches should be separated and give an account of their activities to the elected Legislation Branch.¹⁰ Given these assumptions, the American people have come to see political, philosophical, and legal contradictions in the way democracy has been practiced in this society, especially along the lines of race, class, and gender, with particular reference to individuals’ liberty, equality, and minority rights.¹¹ Reflecting on the first assumption of what a democracy is, there have been a number of U.S. political parties (i.e., American Independent Party, American Reform Party, Democratic Party, Independence Party of America, Republican Party, etc.) that nominate candidates for Congressional and state-level offices as well as for the office of the president. However, this paper focuses on the political spectacle of the current two major political parties—Democratic and Republican—and two functions of ideology, representation of sectional interests and ideological hegemony, to maintain political power, dominance, and control.

Our recent economic crisis has demonstrated that our political elite have consciously or unconsciously created a system that represses the cultural life of the average American citizen, thus provoking the cultural alienation of the populace with their infighting and lack of support for passing Obama’s legislation that may serve the interests of the American people. Americans consciously and/or unconsciously alienate themselves from one another where the liberation of all has been stifled, making it impossible for true democracy to prevail, and making it impossible for Obama to succeed in invoking change. Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, James Madison, and Alexander Hamilton have paved the way for our political intelligentsia. With the magnanimity of their great minds, they set the path for future politicians to follow. If these men who were not nursed in the comforts of aristocracy were alive today, how would they respond to the state of affairs of our national polity today? Would America be America if things remained the same as two-hundred years ago? Would America be as prosperous as she is today if change had not taken place?

The framers of the Declaration of Independence fought for liberty and justice and their whole lives were devoted to this country, to its welfare, and to its constituency. Even though these men were as diverse in personality, opinion, and education as they were in the vast political differences that existed between them, they stood together for the common good and unity of the country, having penned the most important document that speaks to the issues of liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, populism, and laissez-faire. The Declaration of Independence is a document that no other nation-state could rival from that day to now. Americans understand there will always be political dissension, polemical debates, and political spectacles over various issues, but open uncivil and unconstructive tones of disagreement have gone beyond the pale of dignity and respect that politicians should accord one another, regardless of their political and philosophical differences and ideologies. The political conduct of our leaders should be beyond reproach because they are our leaders and we elected them to serve our best interests and not theirs.

We should take note that history does not record any of these men publicly disrespecting each other or a sitting president on the national and international stages of politics, although it was well-known that Jefferson and Franklin politically favored France and Hamilton favored England. But things have changed and the American people have become too politically lethargic and our political parties too hostile, too partisan, and too uncivil to one another that even the national and international communities can clearly see this hostile political behavior. The political spectacle we observe on a daily basis between the executive and legislative branches appear to be a threat to our internal and external security measures. We are not holding our politicians “responsible for the uncivil, unconstructive tone of their disagreements nor holding the previous administration responsible for getting us into such a deep hole. The . . . venom that now passes for political reporting and civic debate is beyond description.”¹²

3. Theoretical Considerations: A Brief Overview

Political institutions should be viewed as functional entities with a shared sense of values, ideologies, and goals that work in behalf of the people. Expanding on a Marxian theory of ideology, ideology can be understood as an objectified reality of language. From a Marxian perspective, an ideology is a set of beliefs, a worldview, or a form of consciousness that may be delusive.¹³ The “cause of these beliefs, and perhaps of their delusiveness, is the social situation and interests of individuals, specifically in the political realm.”¹⁴ Political institutions are ideological and produce conditions of domination and oppression. Through ideology, we come to see the world through our politicians, define ourselves in terms of it, and the electorate tries its “best to fit anomalous behavior into a dominant political framework: Democratic or Republican. Ideology tells us what exists, what is good, what is possible, what we can have, and what we cannot have.”¹⁵ Therefore, we use two functions of ideology to undergird the political spectacle between Obama and the obstructionist Republican Party.

The first function of ideology is representation of sectional interest as universal. This function of ideology is articulated as the interests of all citizens, but it really means to privilege the interests of the power elite over the political, social, and economic interests of non elite citizens. The second function of ideology is hegemony. Ideological hegemony was first conceptualized by Antonio Gramsci, a devout Italian social Marxist philosopher. For Gramsci, hegemony involves “the ability of one class to articulate the interests of other social groups to its own.”¹⁶ Hegemony also legitimates meaning structures that favor the power elite. For example, there appears to be a different meaning structure between Obama’s political agenda that favors the working and middle classes and the Congressional Republicans’ hegemonic agenda that favors the wealthy and large corporations.

For example, when Obama talks about stimulating the economy with additional revenue, the Republicans give the illusion that the deficit will spiral out of control. By doing so, the Republican Congress justifies obstructing Obama’s legislations. The orchestration of obstruction is a form of hegemony “insofar as it is perceived as the means by which structures of domination are produced and perpetuated.”¹⁷ Ideological hegemony is the 112th Republican Congress’s task to articulate the interests of the wealthiest citizens of the United States over the average American citizens’ interests that Obama supports. Given this notion, Congressional Republicans have set themselves against Obama for deviating from the way things are usually done that favor the power elite. For this reason, Obama’s domestic and foreign policies are in stark contrast to the Republicans and he finds himself in gridlock with them. Whenever he submits legislation to congress, the Republicans find ways to attach poison pills to it knowing it will be defeated by the Senate and vetoed by Obama.

4. The Analysis

Representation of sectional interests is the first ideology we discuss in this analysis. The uniqueness of each party “lies in the particular combination of interests it represents.”¹⁸ Both the Democratic and Republican parties represent the sectional interests of their constituencies, but the Democratic Party represents the will of the people, a tenet of what true democracy is. The Party largely represents the interests of the working and middle classes but has garnered support from professionals, academics, and women. Specifically, the Party serves the interests of the industrial workers and unions. This means its strength lies in the major urban areas, though its support extends to lower-income, limited-education, and immigrants from all parts of the country.¹⁹ The interest of the working class has received high priority from the Obama administration. With the healthcare reform having high priority on his domestic agenda, Obama believes that poorer Americans should have access to affordable healthcare, even if these conditions are pre-existing. However, the Republican Party and other anti-healthcare reform critics have misrepresented the information about the bill by arguing that Obama like Clinton wants to socialize healthcare that would create the largest government bureaucracy in history, giving the illusion that the costs associated with healthcare would burden small businesses.²⁰

More Americans—the poor, working poor, middle class, the elderly and many others—will be affected by this legislation than anything else that has been passed in 50 years. Many critics have tried to discourage Obama to abandon this bill, which suggests that Obama and the Democrats have chosen people over profits and corporations. The Obama administration found it necessary to pass this legislation because insurance companies have been denying many working class people coverage, dropping their coverage, or raising their coverage at an exponential rate. After the healthcare reform bill was passed, Obama spoke to the press in the East Room of the White House, calling the bill a reform package finally worthy of the people, even though the 2012 presidential candidates are campaigning to repeal the bill. Obama said:

Tonight, when the pundits said it was no longer possible, we rose above the weight of our politics We pushed back on the undue influence of special interests. We didn't give in to mistrust or cynicism or to fear. Instead, we proved we are people capable of doing big things in tackling our biggest challenges. We proved that this government, a government of the people and by the people still works for the people.²¹

Meanwhile, the Republicans remain opposed, warning they will make the Democrats pay during the mid-term elections, in which they did. This kind of repudiation and representation of the rich only, and obstructionist behavior suggest that the Republicans are bent on revenge and partisan politics. Prior to the Obama election, they had failed the American people and have demonstrated they do not represent the interests of the working class Americans but insist in their talking points that they represent the American people's voices. Senator John McCain, Obama's 2008 presidential candidate rival, saw little need to change America's political and economic course. He supported a continuation of the war in Iraq, favored keeping the healthcare system in its present state, not mentioning that he himself would not qualify for most health insurance plans today given his pre-condition skin cancer.²² The healthcare legislation reform bill will cover approximately 32 million uninsured Americans. Some of the changes that will go into immediate effect are (1) companies cannot drop patients who get sick; (2) free preventative care will become available; (3) there will be no caps on lifetime benefits; and (4) young adults can be covered under their family plan until they turn age 26. Furthermore, the healthcare legislation will start in 2013, and there will be no denial of coverage for pre-existing conditions.

By supporting individuals along the lines of race, specifically Americans of color, these individuals are made to feel included in a society that has otherwise politically, economically, and socially disenfranchised them where the law is used to enforce this disenfranchisement, considering the Obama administration has worked tirelessly to get this healthcare reform bill through Congress. This is what “change” is about. On the lines of class, the marginalized are made to feel as politically unworthy. However, one urology doctor in Florida opposed the healthcare reform bill to the extent that he refuses to treat patients who voted for Obama. He even went so far as to post a sign in his window that reads “If you voted for Obama, seek urologic care elsewhere.”²³ As for the political emancipation of the marginalized, Karl Marx sees that “liberalism is a great improvement on the systems of prejudice and discrimination,”²⁴ in which individuals' participation as a Democrat even allows them to experience “human emancipation.”²⁵ Human emancipation can only be found in “human community on both the micro (individual) and macro (societal) levels, not in isolation from mainstream political activities.

So insisting on a regime of rights encourages us to view each other in ways which undermine the possibility of the real freedom we may find in human emancipation” in the practice of true liberalism, where individuals’²⁶ “religious and political convictions are based on the dictates of conscience and the Rule of Law.”²⁷

The Republican Party, on the other hand, represents the interests of older established groups, large businesses and corporations, and the wealthiest citizens, the agenda of the wealthiest citizens “who fill their coffers on an unprecedented scale for placing federal policy and decision making at their service.”²⁸ The Party’s primary interest rests more in foreign policy than in domestic policy issues, and is not interested in the will of the people. The Party attracts special interests groups than ordinary citizens. They attract individuals who live in suburbia than those who live in urban areas. The Party’s track record shows it does not support individuals along the lines of race or gender, or individuals who traditionally have been marginalized by the ruling elite. Along the lines of gender, women have made great strides in the political, economic, and social arenas. Perhaps the Party has not captured much of a minority base partly because of its “[in]ability to adapt itself to changing conditions,” especially with respect to social and demographic changes.²⁹ The Party’s conservative ideology on many social issues disconnects it from the majority of the American electorate. The Party does not show much social justice for average American citizens. Party members are more concerned about Obama’s regulation policies that would hold corporations (Republicans such as former Governor Mitt Romney believe corporations are people) accountable to polluting the air than they are with achieving social justice for the American people. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* states that:

Although the idea of social justice based on a social contract is mentioned in Plato's *Republic* and was known even earlier, the *Republic's* conception of individual justice is distinctively virtue ethical. To be sure, Plato understands individual justice on analogy with justice ‘writ large’ in the state, but he views the state, or republic, as a kind of organism or beehive, and the justice of individuals is not thought of as primarily involving conformity to just institutions and laws. Rather, the just individual is someone whose soul is guided by a vision of the good, someone in whom reason governs passion and ambition through such a vision. When, but only when, this is the case, is the soul harmonious, strong, beautiful, and healthy, and individual justice precisely consists in such a state of the soul. Actions are then just if they sustain or are consonant with such harmony.³⁰

Given Plato’s conception of justice, justice as a virtue for the Party does not herald itself for the poor, the downtrodden, the marginalized, the oppressed, the working class or the middle class. One of the most recent political spectacles with respect to social justice was the Congressional Republican House, together with the adamantine Tea Party which opposed, but eventually approved with pressure from members of its own party, a payroll tax holiday for the middle class, while opposing any tax increases on the wealthiest citizens. John Rawls regards justice as “the first virtue of social institutions.”³¹ If Rawls’ were to examine the political and social institutions of the United States, he would not find a fair, efficient, and productive system of social cooperation that take the well-being or social welfare of its ordinary citizens into consideration, a moral responsibility of all politicians.

The Republican Party’s battle to gain power to take back the White House, the Senate, and Congress in the 2012 elections has caused much ruckus within its own party. During the 2010 mid-term elections, Republicans won many a governorship and controlled whole state legislatures. After the American people gave the GOP a sweeping victory, the Party defected from a false campaign promise of job creation and began waging culture wars along the lines of race, class, gender, and unions. Not only has the Party waged war against Obama and the Democratic Party, but the Tea Party adamantine, the far extreme faction of the Republican Party, has turned on the leadership of the established Republicans over their disagreement for extending the two-month payroll tax cut for the middle-class and both factions have used ideological hegemony and sectional interests to advance their ideological position against Obama’s policies. Consequently, a recent CNN/ORC poll indicated that 50% of the American people trust President Obama to handle the country’s issues, while 31% percent of those polled trust the Republicans, a 19% difference,³² compared to a *Washington-Post* ABC News Poll a year ago, December 15, 2010.³³ Regardless of the political spectacle between Obama and the 112th Congress and the American electorate’s dissatisfaction with the economy, perhaps the Republicans have positioned Obama for a second term that Republican minority leader McConnell wants to deny him. Ideological hegemony is the second function of ideology we discuss in this analysis.

Since assuming office, Obama has faced an uphill battle in garnering Republican support of the various bills deemed to cater to the interests of the working or middle class. Opposition and obstruction appear to have become especially intense as he began tackling heavy-duty issues as the housing crisis, health care reform, tax reform, and the jobs crisis. Even with the eventual passage of “ObamaCare,” the health care reform act, opposition has continued unabated as states are taking individual actions to dismantle its provisions. Republican obstruction of Obama’s legislation has strong implications—both directly and indirectly—for the welfare and well-being of the populace as a whole. While hegemonic, bipartisan, multiracial opposition to Obama’s foreign and domestic policies have been cited in the media, the overwhelming majority of Obama’s opponents have been Republican and white, although some conservative-right Americans of color have opposed his agenda. Republican roadblocks, gridlocks, and the exercise of hegemonic behavioral practices also have been consistent in such areas as political appointments. For example, Richard Cordray was blocked from becoming the first director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, as both sides accused the other of playing partisan politics with the new watchdog agency. Other political blockades affected the appointment of Caitlan Halligan to the U.S. Court of Appeals.

History indicates that voting along party lines is nothing new. However, the malfeasant undertones and overtones of the resistance Obama has encountered suggest something may be operating beyond the routine partisan politics of the past. While some politicians, the media, and a few key conservative African Americans may give the impression that it is all about doomed policies and broken promises, some MSNBC and CNN reports suggest that race may have a bearing on the Obama administration’s battle with the Republican Congress to get his legislation through.

Even on issues that Republicans typically support such as reduced taxes, there has been fierce resistance to extending the Bush-era initiated payroll tax breaks to workers. James Clyburn (D-SC), the highest ranking African-American in Congress asserts that the political game that Republicans continue to play is another example of ideological hegemony.³⁴ Many of these workers, though middle-class, are struggling to deal with inflationary health, food, and housing costs. Their problems are likely compounded by the additional burdens they assume in helping relatives. On a related note, the bill regarding payroll taxes also includes a clause on extending the benefits for the long-term unemployed, to which Republicans are demanding drug testing as a condition for receiving benefits. Clyburn points out the inconsistency and unfairness of demanding such tests of the unemployed while not requiring them of those receiving oil and gas subsidies. Furthermore, Republicans are in staunch opposition to additional taxes on millionaires and billionaires.

In the case of Obama’s jobs proposal, Republicans opposed the plan before it was fully presented. While everyone is not expected to agree with everything that any president suggests, it is only fair to hear the proposal out before jumping to conclusions. If Republican hegemonic practices continue, progress in addressing the nation’s economic problems will be severely hampered into and after the 2012 election. Although we stated that hegemony involves domination and control, it is also a question of leadership through the colonization of abusive legislative power. In short, John W. Dean, an American lawyer who served as Richard Nixon’s White House Counsel from 1970 to 1973, writes that the Republican Party not only politically disenfranchises the average American citizen, but it has engaged in consequential activities such as taking America to war in Iraq on false pretenses, torturing perceived enemies, spying on millions of Americans to look for terrorists. These activities have been acquiesced to by the Republican-controlled Congress and by millions of conservatives who tolerate and encourage this kind of hegemony.³⁵

5. Conclusion

From an ideological perspective, the political behavior of Congressional Republicans “have . . . achieved the small miracle of letting Mr. Obama position himself as an election-year tax cutter, although he’s spent most of his Presidency promoting tax increases and he would hit the economy with one of the largest tax increases ever in 2013.”³⁶ Established Congressional Republicans and extremist Tea Party Republicans have made Obama’s presidential task difficult, and many Americans wonder why. In 1883, over 125 years ago, the great Frederick Douglass who was born a slave in Easton, Maryland, gave us a plausible answer we could apply to Obama and the behavior of the 112th Congress. Douglass said, “Though the colored man is no longer subject to barter and sale, he is surrounded by an adverse settlement which fetters all his movements. In his downward course, he meets with no resistance, but his course upward is resented and resisted at every step of his progress.

If he comes in ignorance, rags, and wretchedness, he conforms to the popular belief of his character, and in that character he is welcome; but if he shall come as a gentleman, a scholar, and a statesman, he is hailed as a contradiction to the national faith concerning his race, and his coming is resented as impudence. In one case he may provoke contempt and derision, but in the other he is an affront to pride and provokes malice.” Even though Douglass made this statement over a century ago, President Obama fits his description of a black man who has risen above the popular belief that American society in general holds about African Americans and other Americans of color. Obama is a scholar and a statesman and perhaps is resented for a demeanor that goes against status quo ideology. Obama’s representation of what Marx calls the proletariat or the working class, his populist stance, and his willingness to work with the conservative right on a bipartisan level would naturally provoke the malice we have observed in Republican politicians and the Tea Party extremists.

Notes

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² Murray Edelman. *The Politics of Misinformation* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1.

³ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁵ John Stewart, Ben Karlin, and David Javerbaum. *America: A Citizen’s Guide to Democracy Inaction* “The Media: Democracy’s Valiant Vulgarians” (New York: Warner Books, 2004), 1.

⁶ “Aristotle.” <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-politics>. (accessed on December 24, 2011).

⁷ Walter Laqueur, ed. *A Dictionary of Politics* (New York: The Free Press, 1971), 144.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Robert P. Watson. “Obama’s Accomplishments to Date,” Robert Watson is an associate professor of American Studies at Lynn University in Public Policy. He shared a copy of these accomplishments with me via email, and the list has been checked by Politifact.

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¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 147.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

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²² John R. Talbott. *Obamanomics: How Bottom-Up Economic Prosperity Will Replace Trickle-Down Economics* (New York, NY: Seven Stories Press, 2008), 17-18.

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- ²⁴ Karl Marx. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/marx/#2.1>. (accessed on December 24, 2011).
- ²⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁷ Walter Lacqueur. *op. cit.* (see reference 7), 313.
- ²⁸ Tom Hamburger and Peter Wallsten, *One Party Country: The Republican Plan for Dominance in the 21st Century* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2006), 5.
- ²⁹ Ibid., 121.
- ³⁰ “Justice as Virtue.” <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/justice-virtue>. (accessed on December 24, 2011).
- ³¹ John Rawls. *A Theory of Justice* (Boston: MA, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), 3.
- ³² “Who Do You Trust To Handle the Country’s Issues?” A CNN/ORC Poll of December 16-18, 2011.
- ³³ TPMDC. “Poll: Americans Trust Obama More Than Republicans To Guide Country,” <http://tpmdc.talkingpointsmemo.com/2010/12/poll-americans-trust-obama-more-than-republicans-to-guide-country.php> (accessed on December 24, 2011).
- ³⁴ James E. Clyburn. “Clyburn Floor Remarks against Partisan Legislation,” <http://clyburn.house.gov/press-release/clyburn-floor-remarks-against-partisan-legislation>. (accessed on December 24, 2011). Since 1993, James Clyburn is a member of the Democratic Party and is the U.S. Representative for South Carolina's 6th congressional district and the assistant Democratic leader since 2011. He was previously House Majority Whip, serving in that post from 2007 to 2011. The districts he serves are Florence, Sumter, and large portions of Columbia and Charleston.
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