

THE OBAMA CHILL: IN 2012 OBAMA WILL RUN AGAINST DEMOCRATIC CONGRESS

There's a lot to say about Obama's foolish call for a spending freeze in the middle of the Great Recession.

But for now, consider the point that Chris Bowers is making: the spending freeze won't happen. It won't happen because Congress, whose remaining power in the era of post-Cheney has been reduced to clutching purse strings, will not let it happen.

In the midst of the rightful outrage over President Obama's call for cuts in social spending during poor economic times, keep in mind that the likelihood of social spending actually being frozen or cut remain pretty low.

This is because the people who actually write spending bills—members of the House Appropriation and Budget committees—say they won't be freezing or cutting social spending:

House Democrats are rejecting an idea floated by the Obama administration to freeze or cut discretionary spending in 2011.

Key members of the House Appropriations and Budget committees told The Hill this month they would not go along with alternative spending plans being requested by White House Budget Director Peter Orszag, which are part of the administration's plan to reduce the deficit.

Months ago, the White House asked the relevant House Democrats to prepare three budget drafts, including one with a freeze on discretionary spending and one with a 5% cut in discretionary spending. **They didn't even prepare the drafts.**

Members of Congress write and vote on the budget, and members of Congress like to bring the bacon home to their districts. As such, the legislative process will ultimately make President Obama's call for a spending freeze a hollow one. Like the President's deficit commission, not much will actually come of this.

This call for a spending cut is a press release.

But it's more than a press release. It is a promise that is conveniently scheduled to come due just in time for the 2012 election season. In mid 2011, Obama will be haranguing Congress about helping him fulfill his promise. And Congress, up for election like they always are, will ignore him.

And then Obama, who has already saddled Congress with accepting unpopular legislation over popular legislation, appears to be putting his perceived self-interest above Congress'. And this may be no different—by the time the 2012 election comes around, Obama will be in full Deficit Troll mode, blaming those mean Democrats in Congress for his own failures. Maybe I'm wrong on this, but the only logical explanation I can fathom for this obtuse policy is to set up an Obama-vs-the-Dems narrative for Obama's reelection.

And mind you, I spoke of Obama's "perceived self-interest" above, because no matter how you look at it this policy simply makes no sense. Voters in 2010 are going to be voting on their pocketbook. Voters in 2012 are going to be

voting on their pocketbook. They don't really care about deficits. Rather, they care about a working economy. And this little PR stunt will only make it harder for Obama to do what he needs to do to get the economy working again.

Hopefully, though, it'll serve to clarify the issue for Congress: Obama's not looking out for them, so they're going to have to pass sensible legislation without Obama if need be. Including more spending to stimulate the economy.