

One fixes the roof; another burns down the House

Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune

U.S. Rep. Mike Simpson, R-Idaho, is tired of cleaning up the messes his seat mate, 1st District Congressman Raul Labrador, keeps leaving behind.

Case in point was last week's Department of Homeland Security debacle. Seeking leverage against President Obama's executive order sparing 5 million undocumented workers from deportation, Labrador's House Freedom Caucus deprived Speaker John Boehner of the votes needed just to keep the agency afloat for three weeks.

It was left to Simpson not only to cast a responsible vote, but to serve as floor manager for the measure ultimately shoring up America's first line of defense against terrorism.

But this weekend, Simpson broke his silence. Well, sort of.

His op-ed, appearing in newspapers throughout the 2nd Congressional District, requires a little reading between the lines - but not much. For instance:

Unfortunately, too many of my colleagues in Congress ... view gridlock and obstructionism as a means to appease the politically pure and point fingers at anyone who seeks a different solution. ... Instead, a faction of my Republican colleagues see obstructionist tactics like shutting down the government, or one of its most important agencies, as just another tool in the construction of a manufactured crisis. ... This small segment of Republicans ... represent the most irresponsible, unrealistic and ineffective segment of our Republican caucus.

Translation: Our side believes in fixing the roof. Your side would rather burn down the House.

Even worse, they're imposing a losing strategy while we are actually winning in the courts - the legitimate and constitutional venue for resolving disputes between the executive and legislative branches.

These members have no credible policy proposals to stop the president's unlawful actions. Instead they hold our national security hostage with shutdown threats, and then label any member who opposes their strategy as "capitulating" to the president.

Translation: How did you miss high school government class? And how did you get so far in life without passing remedial math? It takes 60 votes in the Senate to do anything and a two-thirds vote in each house to override a certain presidential veto. The GOP majorities come nowhere close to that.

The majority of the Republican caucus has given ample opportunities for this loud minority to play out their strategy. However, this small faction has failed to achieve any conservative victories and led our party so far astray that the Democrats have been able to exert influence in the absence of a united Republican Party.

Translation: If we can't cut a deal with Labrador and his fellow House Freedom Caucus members - such as Justin Amash of Michigan and Mark Meadows of North Carolina - we'll strike a bargain with Democrats Nancy Pelosi and Steny Hoyer. The Hastert rule - which allowed 30 or so House Republicans to block their own leadership - is dead. But don't blame us for giving Democrats more influence. If you don't want to play, get the hell out of the way.

My pro-shutdown colleagues supported John Boehner for speaker, before opposing him, then supporting him again, and now criticizing him.

Translation: That's you, Raul.

The truth is my Republican colleagues and I have a critical and extremely short window of time to prove to the American people that we can govern responsibly. This brief window is our chance to demonstrate to the American people that they should look to a Republican as the next president of the United States. ...

Translation: If Hillary Rodham Clinton becomes the 45th president of the United States, you'll know who to

blame. - M.T.