



Ray LaHood: Sequester sirens not 'scare tactics'

By: [Katie Glueck](#)

February 25, 2013 08:54 AM EST

Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood on Monday pushed back on the notion that the Obama administration is using scare tactics to highlight the impacts of sequestration, saying instead that they are issuing warning “flares.”

“We’re sending up a warning flare, not to scare anybody but just so people understand there are consequences to sequester,” LaHood said on MSNBC’s “Morning Joe.” “And it can all be avoided if people in both parties would embrace the president’s plan...it’s a good one, it saves the money that needs to be saved, and it doesn’t take the meat ax approach to it.”

LaHood is one of a number of administration voices sounding alarms about how the automatic, across-the-board spending cuts set to kick in this Friday would negatively impact the country. Some Republicans have downplayed those arguments, saying the administration is exaggerating the effects of sequestration.

“We’re not using scare tactics,” LaHood reiterated. “What we’re doing is sending up warning flares to people that these cuts have consequences, and here’s what the consequences are.”

For his part, LaHood has cautioned that sequestration means [disaster](#) for air travel. On Monday, LaHood — a former GOP congressman — called on Republicans to examine the president’s proposals for averting sequestration, and to work with it if they are unsatisfied.

“I’m optimistic about this,” LaHood said of the chances of hammering out a deal. “I just think there’s an awful lot of shared pain that’s going to take place starting on March 1 if this sequester goes in and I don’t think anybody really wants that to happen.”

Gene Sperling, the director of the Obama administration’s National Economic Council, struck a less conciliatory note on Monday, jabbing Republicans for staking out an “absolutist” position over revenue-related questions.

“Now what’s been frustrating for us is our Republican colleagues, in the House of Representatives particularly, have taken a position, an absolutist position, that there can’t be one single penny of tax expenditures or loophole closing to raise any revenue at all,” Sperling said on CNN’s “Starting Point.” “That’s an absolutist or ideological position. I know some people may believe it. But to have a bipartisan compromise to move forward, everyone’s got to give a little bit. So this is a choice that our Republican colleagues are making. They would rather stay with this absolutist position even if it means that we go into the sequester and start to see these type of harmful cuts.”

He added that Obama, in contrast, is offering “compromise.”