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Boehner says Obama "not serious" about deficit

By

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House Speaker John Boehner said on Sunday that President Obama is "really not serious" about tackling America's deficit problem.

In an interview broadcast on CBS' "Face the Nation" Sunday, Boehner accused the president of failing to take "real action" on the deficit, saying it is time to "just deal with" the nation's economic problems.

"He's talking about [the deficit]," Boehner told Harry Smith. "But I'm not seeing real action here. And I just think this is the moment. We all know what the problems are. So, why don't we just deal with them? No more kicking the can down the road."

"Now is the time to deal with the fiscal problems we have in an adult-like manner," he added.

In a CBS News town hall on the economy this week, Mr. Obama renewed his call for deficit reductions and reiterated the argument that tax hikes for the wealthy would go a long way in reducing the nation's \$4 trillion deficit. Republicans oppose such hikes.

"We think we can identify \$2 trillion worth of cuts - in spending, including defense spending - which has grown very, very rapidly over the last decade," Mr. Obama said. Those cuts, he said, included "some things that I care deeply about. Some programs that I think are good to have, but

are not absolute necessities."

"But," he continued, "that only gets you about half of the way there. So what I've also said is let's get a trillion dollars in revenue from those of us who can afford to pay a little bit more. Because I think the concept of shared sacrifice is something that most Americans believe in."

Boehner said on "Face the Nation" that tax cuts are the one thing that should not be on the table in the discussion about deficit reduction.

"The top one percent of wage earners in the United States pay 40 percent of the income tax," he told Smith. "The people he's talking about taxing are the very people that we expect to reinvest in our economy and to create jobs."

"Medicare, Medicaid - everything should be on the table, except raising taxes," he added.

Boehner also stood by his [recent pledge](#) to withhold support for raising the \$14.3 trillion debt ceiling unless Democrats agreed to spending cuts that exceed the increase in the debt ceiling.

Arguing that the parties will be able to find a middle ground, the Ohio Republican said he understood the importance of raising the debt ceiling - but that doing so "without dealing with the underlying problem is totally irresponsible."

"Listen, I understand what the president was saying about jeopardizing the full faith in credit of the United States," Boehner said. "I'm ready to cut a deal today."

"We don't have to wait until the 11th hour," he continued. "But I am not gonna walk away from this moment. We have a window of opportunity to act. Because if we don't act, the markets are gonna act for us. Our creditors are gonna act for us."

According to projections by the Treasury, the U.S. government is expected to hit the debt ceiling by August 2. If Congress does not approve an increase to the limit, the federal government could default on its bonds for the first time in history, much of the government should shut down, and Social Security and Medicare checks would likely see delays as a result of the government's inability to make payments to agencies. Even approaching the August 2 deadline without raising the ceiling could destabilize markets.

Boehner said he hoped the president was "serious" about making a deal on the debt limit.

"I've talked to the president all year, privately, about the act that we were not gonna increase the debt limit without serious changes," he said. "I mean, this conversation has been going on for quite awhile... I've said, 'Mr. President, come on, you and I, let's lock arms and we'll jump out of the boat together.' I'm serious about dealing with this. And I hope he's just as serious."

Despite the recent urgency given to the issue of raising the debt limit, a new [Gallup poll](#) indicates that most Americans object to such a move: According to the poll, voters want their representatives to vote against raising the debt limit ceiling, by a 47 percent to 19 percent margin. Thirty-four percent of respondents said they didn't know enough to say.

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