

Editorial: Republicans are failing Americans

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Americans' respect for their Congress has, sad to say, diminished in recent years. But citizens still expect a minimal level of competence and responsibility: Pay the bills and try not to embarrass us in front of the world.

By those minimal standards, this Congress is failing. More specifically, the Republican leaders of the House of Representatives are failing. They should fulfill their basic duties to the American people or make way for legislators who will.

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We don't come to that view as rabid partisans. On many of the issues stalemating Washington, we find plenty of blame to go around. We've criticized President Obama's reluctance to pursue entitlement reform. The last time the country reached the debt ceiling, we urged both sides to compromise on revenue and spending in the interest of long-term fiscal soundness.

This time, fiscal responsibility isn't even a topic. Instead, Republicans have shut much of the government in what they had to know was a doomed effort to derail the Affordable Care Act. That law, in case you've forgotten in the torrent of propaganda, is hardly revolutionary. It is an effort to extend health insurance to some of the 40 million or so people in this country who have none. It acts through the existing private-insurance market. Republicans tried to block its passage and failed; they hoped to have it declared unconstitutional and failed; and they did their best to toss

Obama out of the White House after one term in order to strangle it in its cradle, and they failed again.

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