



Who is the winner here?

With the recent resolution of the debt ceiling and the resulting crisis, my thoughts have graduated to: Who won in this skirmish? My personal beliefs are that we, the citizenry, lost.

Whether you are a Democrat, Republican, independent or some other party of choice, *you lost*. If you are for or against a balanced budget, *you lost*. If you are for or against our involvement in the wars that are going on in the world, *you lost*. If you work and pay your taxes and make plans toward your future or planned retirement, *you lost*. If you are in the older population and have already retired or have become unable to work, *you lost*. If you are in the middle-age group, working day to day to survive, *you lost*. If you are just starting on your work career with newly formulated plans for your life, *you lost*. If you are the very young and approaching the educational or informative age in life, *you lost*.

We also lost because the debt is still there and spending more money than we have in revenue continues. The obvious fix of increasing income while decreasing spending was not arrived at. We lost because our elected officials failed to represent their constituents' desires. Rather than do their job, they postured themselves in such a manner as to not have to make a true decision concerning the national debt or a balanced budget. Instead, they just put a Band-Aid over the matter and created a "joint select committee on deficit reduction," composed of six Democrats and six Republicans to find more savings to achieve an additional \$1.5 trillion debt ceiling increase. This committee is guaranteed a fast-tracked vote on its recommendations before Dec. 23, which means that it basically is voted up or down.

If the Joint Congressional Committee fails to come to an agreement on a plan of at least \$1.2 trillion in savings, or if a sufficient plan that it agrees to fails to become law, there will be an across-the-board cut of 50 percent defense spending and 50 percent domestic spending, with Social Security and low-income programs exempt and Medicare cuts limited to 2 percent of the cuts.

And while Social Security and low-income programs are exempt under the agreement and Medicare cuts are limited, the other ways that we receive government serv-

ices—such as national parks, health research, environmental and consumer protections—education grants and general services in general are at risk and are hanging in the balance. Decades of promises through Social Security, Medicare and educational opportunities are at risk. Additionally, the way they measure and determine cost-of-living allowances (COLAs) also are on the chopping block.

One disturbing feature of the agreement is that it contains no new taxes, and the "compromise" really only looks at spending cuts as part of the package. And while no one wants to pay more taxes, we all must realize that the benefits we have received and hope to receive in our future have a price tag. We're also not looking at any additional corporate or individual revenue, especially revenue gained from tax cuts for the wealthiest 2 percent of Americans. Those corporations that pay little or no taxes, and that in some cases get refunds greater than any tax liability, are once again left to increase their own wealth at the expense of the other taxpayers.

COLAs—Both active and retired members appear in line for a cost-of-living adjustment in the near future. The COLA will be based upon the July 2011 CPI for active workers, and they should receive any increase in their Sept. 30 paycheck. Retiree COLA will be based on the CPI through September 2011, and is effective Dec. 1 and will be payable in their January 2012 annuity check .

In closing, I want to thank the many retirees who continue to support the NALC COLCPE program. If you do not currently contribute, I invite you to call our office and we can arrange to have your donation withheld from your monthly annuity. Additionally, each active and retired member should become an e-Activist to stay informed on action that might affect your job and/or your retirement. ☒

NALC Retirement Department
Toll-free number: 800-424-5186
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