

# The Do Nothing Republican Congress

A look at the first session of the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress shows that the Republican-led House of Representatives has not made progress on issues important to the American people. With 8 legislative days remaining in this year, the Republican leadership is poised to leave a long to-do list of critical legislation unfinished. Here's a look at the dismal Republican record, and how it compares to recent years:

## DAYS IN SESSION:

2013: 132\*

2012: 106

2011: 135

2010: 109

2009: 148

\*actual days in session, plus the 8 scheduled remaining legislative days

## BILLS SIGNED INTO LAW

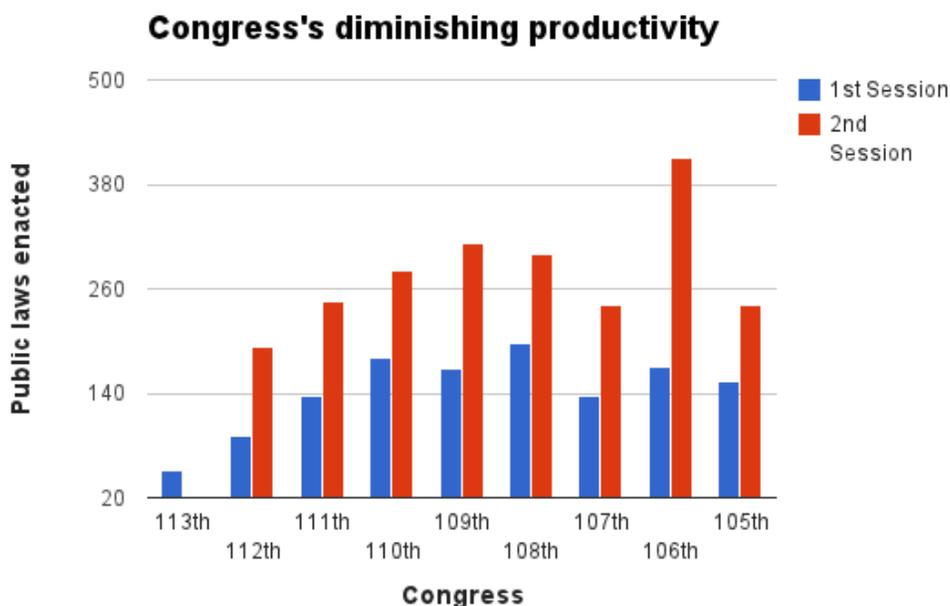
2013: 56

2012: 193

2011: 90

2010: 258

2009: 125



Source: Washington Post

House Republicans say they are unconcerned with their inability to get things done for the American people:

House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH): “We should not be judged on how many new laws we create ... We ought to be judged on how many laws we repeal. We’ve got more laws than the administration could ever enforce.” [[CBS’ Face the Nation, 7/21](#)]

Rep. Steve Southerland (R-FL): “If you value government doing things, you’re going to be more harsh on what we’ve done. But if you think government does too much, then it’s not as alarming.” [[Wall Street Journal, 12/1](#)]

Rep. Reid Ribble (R-WI): “I ran on a government that did less. I felt the government was overreaching, and the citizens that sent me didn’t want me to be overaggressive in writing new laws.” [[New York Times, 12/3](#)]

Republicans' lack of legislative accomplishments on a wide variety of issues throughout 2013 is receiving increasing criticism:

## The Washington Post

“The bad news is that whatever gets done in December will still be part of a year with record-low congressional accomplishment.”

“From the confirmation of a new Federal Reserve chairman to the expiration of dairy pricing rules, House and Senate leaders head into the final month of 2013 with a checklist that is short but critical. But even a final burst of activity would do little to change the historic arc of this calendar year under the Capitol dome.”

“According to congressional records, there have been fewer than 60 public laws enacted in the first 11 months of this year, so below the previous low in legislative output that officials have already declared this first session of the 113th Congress the least productive ever. In 1995, when the newly empowered GOP congressional majority confronted the Clinton administration, 88 laws were enacted, the record low in the post-World War II era.” [\[12/1\]](#)

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

“Lawmakers are struggling to negotiate deals on farm programs and food stamps, and on the budget for a fiscal year that began two months ago. Many want to pass new Iran sanctions, stave off a cut to doctors' Medicare payments and revisit policy on unemployment benefits.”

“The year's final month caps a legislative session that has been long on partisanship, indecision and brinkmanship, and short on compromise and lawmaking. Congress has enacted only 52 new laws this year. At that pace, lawmakers would fall far short of the 284 laws enacted by the prior Congress from early 2011 to early 2013, according to the website GovTrack, which follows legislation. That itself was a significant drop-off from earlier sessions.”

“Also at month's end, emergency benefits for the long-term unemployed expire. Democrats have pushed to continue the program of extended benefits for an additional year, arguing that while the 7.3% jobless rate logged in October is down from a high of 10% in October 2009, it is still high by historical standards. But a one-year extension would cost roughly \$25 billion, and Republicans have historically resisted its continuation.”

“Congress's to-do list also includes passing a new five-year farm bill to replace legislation that has already lapsed. But lawmakers are divided over how to move away from a system of direct payments to farmers and how deeply to reduce spending on nutrition programs, known as food stamps.” [\[12/1\]](#)

## The New York Times

“The House straggled back to the Capitol on Monday night with just two weeks left before its likely entry into the Congressional record book for underachievement, still clinging to hopes that deals can be reached in the coming days on a budget and other once-routine bills that could ease some of the sting.”

*Office of Democratic Whip Steny H. Hoyer, 12/3/13*

“The 113th Congress has passed all of 55 laws so far this year, seven fewer at this point than the 112th Congress — the least productive Congress ever. House and Senate negotiators will meet on Wednesday to try to come to terms on a farm bill, but they remain far apart, especially on food-stamp cuts that the House is demanding.”

“It is not as if there is nothing to do. If agreement cannot be reached on a farm bill by the end of the month, an agricultural system in place for decades will suddenly cease. The price of milk is set to skyrocket.”

“At the same time, major bills passed by the Senate with bipartisan majorities to overhaul the nation’s immigration laws, update farm programs, allow states to collect sales taxes from online retailers and protect lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people from workplace discrimination have been blocked from votes in the House — where members of both parties say they could pass.” [\[12/3\]](#)

## NationalJournal

“The House returns to session on Monday with just seven more days on the legislative schedule this year and time running out on a budget deal, a farm-bill reauthorization, and a long list of other items requiring action by year's end.”

“Major unresolved topics include how to fund government beyond Jan. 15, how far reforms to National Security Agency surveillance should go, and whether to extend emergency unemployment insurance for 1.3 million Americans.”

“Despite the crunch, floor activity in the chamber is limited, and the Republican focus on the Affordable Care Act in committees won't be disrupted. A vote on a bill to rein in abusive patent-litigation and another to address regulation on small private-equity funds are among the only roll-call votes anticipated.” [\[12/1\]](#)

## THE HUFFINGTON POST

“The House is only scheduled to work eight days between now and January 7, when members return for the second session of the 113th Congress.”

“The House had 239 days off scheduled during 2013, and they have even more off days scheduled for next year.”

“The 2014 calendar for the House, released in October by House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R-Va.), shows members will only work only 113 days. That's down from 2013, when House lawmakers were scheduled to meet for 126 days. Only 107 days were scheduled in 2012.” [\[12/1\]](#)

## THE HILL

“The House could act on a flurry of bipartisan deals when it returns in December for the final two legislative weeks of 2013. Or, it could head home for the holidays emptyhanded.”

*Office of Democratic Whip Steny H. Hoyer, 12/3/13*

“Negotiators are trying to finish House-Senate conference reports on the budget, a farm bill and a water projects bill before the end of the year. Aides say there is a slim chance that all three could be done in time for the House to vote in 2013, but a likelier scenario is one or two of them will be punted into next year.” [[12/1](#)]



“Congress is on track to beat its own low record of productivity, enacting fewer laws this year than at any point in the past 66 years.”

“It's a continuing slide of productivity that began in 2011, after Republicans recaptured the House majority in the 2010 elections, and the ability to find common ground has eluded the two parties while the legislative to-do list piles up.”

“The 112th Congress, covering 2011-12, emerged as the least productive two-year legislating period on record, while 2013 is on track to become the least productive single year in modern history.”

“According to official legislative statistics, 52 laws have been enacted through early November. It is the lowest record of legislative activity since at least 1947, when the data collection began. The lowest prior year was 1995, with a new Republican House, when only 88 laws were enacted.” [[11/30](#)]



“With only a handful of remaining legislative days on their calendar, this current Congress is on track to go down as one of the most unproductive in modern history.”

“The paltry number of bills Congress has passed into law this year paints a vivid picture of just how bad the gridlock has been for lawmakers, whose single-digit approval rating illustrates that the public is hardly satisfied with their trickle of legislative activity.”

“At this point in George W. Bush's second term as president, for example, 113 bills had been enacted into law, according to numbers crunched by Pew Research Center's Drew DeSilver. In the same amount of time during the 110th Congress – from January until before the Thanksgiving recess of 2007 – that number was 120.”

“With the ceremonial measures excluded, according to DeSilver's calculations, Congress has enacted just 44 'substantive' laws so far this year.”

“That's well below the average of about 70 substantive bills passed in the equivalent time period between 1999 and 2012.” [[11/26](#)]