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From: Joseph W. Handrick
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Subject: FW: WestClip: Wisconsin Redistricting

From: westlaw@westlaw.com [mailto:westlaw@westlaw.com]
Sent: Thursday, August 04, 2011 6:16 AM
To: Carol Bannen
Cc: Joseph W. Handrick
Subject: WestClip: Wisconsin Redistricting

8/3/11 WICAPTIMES 12
8/3/11 Capital Times (Madison, WI) 12
2011 WLNR 15394969

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August 3, 2011

Section: THE CAP TIMES

WISPOLITICS.COM STOCK REPORT

RISING

14th Senate District attention

Election-watchers are increasingly keeping their eyes on the Aug. 9 recall election in this central Wisconsin district, with some thinking it could be one of a couple of pivotal races that will determine if Democrats take control of the state Senate. The calculus goes like this: If GOP Sens. Dan Kapanke and Randy Hopper get beat as many handicappers expect, but their colleagues Rob Cowles, Sheila Harsdorf and Alberta Darling survive, then the third seat Dems need would be the 14th, now held by Luther Olsen, R-Ripon. If Olsen goes down, then it would come down to Dem Sen. Jim Holperin's seat on Aug. 16, the handicappers say. Recent polling indicates the race between Olsen and challenger Rep. Fred Clark, D-Baraboo, is a tossup.

2nd CD speculation

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With Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin looking more and more like a U.S. Senate candidate, speculation heightens about who would vie to take her place in the 2nd Congressional District. Most insiders assume state Rep. Mark Pocan, the former Joint Finance Committee co-chair, small businessman and an openly gay pol (like Baldwin), will jump in. But many other names abound, including: former Dane County Executive Kathleen Falk, former Madison Mayor Dave Cieslewicz, state Sen. Jon Erpenbach and state Rep. Kelda Helen Roys. Dane County politicos, without a recall election in their backyard, wonder about the many possibilities if sitting elected officials enter the race, leaving open and redistricted seats in their wake.

State spending

Surprise! Despite what many think, state spending in the new Republican spending plan is up over the budget Jim Doyle and Dems put together two years ago. The nonpartisan Wisconsin Taxpayer Alliance reminds budget-watchers in a new report that the 2011-13 state budget is up 3.5 percent to $64.32 billion and the general fund budget is up 7.6 percent to $29.03 billion. The major reason? According to WTA, one-time federal stimulus money is disappearing and state general fund taxes had to replace it. Also, according to WTA, tax and fee cuts are "surprisingly small" - just $140.8 million in net general fund cuts.

MIXED

Southeastern Wisconsin rail

The long-debated KRM commuter line comes to an end, but the Milwaukee streetcar plan gets a big boost. On July 25, the Southeastern Regional Transit Authority met for the last time, according to legislative dictate, and stopped a $284 million commuter rail line linking Kenosha, Racine and Milwaukee. The authority also asked that $6 million in federal money set aside for the commuter line go to bus systems in Racine, Kenosha and Milwaukee counties and will return what's left from the collection of a $2 rental car fee collected from 2006-09. While that was disappointing to rail boosters, they get a lift when the Milwaukee City Council votes the next day to give the green light to a downtown streetcar line. The vote ends more than 10 years of debate over how to spend more than $54 million in federal grant money.

Redistricting challenges

One attempt to get federal intervention in the GOP-led redistricting effort goes down, but Democrats say their real focus is on a case that's still pending. A federal court dismisses an attempt by former state Sen. Judy Robson to reopen the court's 2002 order redrawing the state's political maps, but a redistricting observer points out that effort was always a long shot - the motion was filed before the maps passed the Legislature and wasn't amended to include new information after the bill passed. A separate complaint, filed by Robson and 14 others in June and amended to include the newly passed maps, is still pending in federal court. That group argues that the new maps are unconstitutional

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and asks the court to redraw the boundaries, as federal judges have done three times in the past three decades.

FALLING

Positive ads

If it seems like there are few positive recall ads out there, you're probably right. Like them or not, nasty ads seem to work, political pros say. And that's why as the recall elections draw closer, the broadcast ads seem to get nastier. In the Milwaukee-area race involving GOP Sen. Alberta Darling, one radio ad uses recent high-profile violent crimes to slam Democratic opponent Sandy Pasch for her past support of a now-rescinded early release program, and a TV ad alleges she voted "against funding to protect our children against Internet predators" and urges viewers to tell her to protect children, not criminals. An anti-Darling radio ad says Darling has a secret - she wants to "end Medicare as we know it." In the central Wisconsin race involving GOP Sen. Luther Olsen, Democratic opponent Fred Clark's checkered driving record, his collision with a bicyclist and his insulting words against a constituent who gave him the brush-off are all fodder for hard-hitting ads. And in the 12th Senate District, Republican businesswoman Kim Simac gets accused of not paying her taxes. Under the radar are the nasty-grams coming through the mail. The tone of direct mail could be even harsher in the coming days before the Aug. 9 and Aug. 16 elections, insiders say.

Post offices

Some 41 post offices in Wisconsin are being considered for closure as the U.S. Postal Service tries to cut costs. USPS is considering closing more than 3,600 post offices. The Wisconsin post offices being considered for closure include six in the city of Milwaukee. The rest are in rural areas throughout the state.

Sick leave

A Milwaukee County judge rules that the city's controversial ordinance requiring paid sick days for employees is "over" after state lawmakers enacted legislation prohibiting that local law in May. In issuing his ruling, Judge Thomas Cooper says he doesn't "feel real good about how this happened politically," saying the state essentially removed the city's power in passing the new state bill.

The Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce hails the decision as "an official end to a nearly three-year legal and legislative battle led by MMAC to protect workers and employers from this job-killing mandate." The group requesting that the law take effect - 9to5, National Association of Working Women - vows to continue fighting for the law, saying that it is "sick and tired of the corporate lobbyists running this town and now state."
The ordinance was originally passed by 69 percent of Milwaukee voters in November 2008. Legal challenges by the commerce association kept it from going into effect then.

---- INDEX REFERENCES ----

COMPANY: MMAC LLC; MEDICARE; MADISON INVESTMENT ADVISORS INC; UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

NEWS SUBJECT: (U.S. Congressional Campaigns (US07); Economic Policy & Policymakers (EC69); Public Finance (PU60); Economics & Trade (EC26); Public Affairs (PU31); Legislation (LE97); Government (GO80); Local Government (LO75))

REGION: (Wisconsin (WI54); North America (NO39); U.S. Midwest Region (MI19); USA (US73); Americas (AM92))

Language: EN

OTHER INDEXING: (BALDWIN; COMMERCE; CONGRESSWOMAN TAMMY BALDWIN; DEMOCRATIC; FALLING; GOP; JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE; KRM; MADISON; MEDICARE; METROPOLITAN MILWAUKEE ASSOCIATION; MILWAUKEE; MIXED; MMAC; NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WORKING WOMEN; RISING; SOUTHEASTERN REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY; SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN; TV; US POSTAL SERVICE; USPS; WISCONSIN; WISCONSIN TAXPAYER ALLIANCE; WISPOLITICS; WTA) (Alberta Darling; Dan Kapanke; Darling; Dave Cieslewicz; Fred Clark; Jim Doyle; Jim Holperin; Jon Erpenbach; Judy Robson; Kathleen Falk; Kelda Helen Roys; Kim Simac; Luther Olsen; Mark Pocan; Olsen; Randy Hopper; Rob Cowles; Robson; Sandy Pasch; Sheila Harsdorf; Thomas Cooper)

EDITION: ALL

Word Count: 1066
8/3/11 WICAPTIMES 12
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Westlaw

8/3/11 WICAPTIMES 26
8/3/11 Capital Times (Madison, WI) 26
2011 WLNR 15394979

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August 3, 2011

Section: THE CAP TIMES

1/9/2012
WHAT WE SAID ONLINE THIS WEEK

Walker should veto redistricting plan

Gov. Scott Walker has launched what some are referring to as a "charm offensive."

With the approach of recall elections that could cost his Republican Party control of the state Senate, Walker is reportedly attempting to alter his image as a rigid partisan.

Here's a place to begin: The governor should veto the hyper-partisan plan for redistricting Wisconsin legislative seats that was drawn up and hastily passed by his legislative allies.

"The Republican redistricting plans are very polarized and extremely partisan," explains state Sen. Fred Risser. "They cut up communities of interest and unnecessarily limit the competitiveness of many districts."

Walker should veto the bill and sit down with Risser to discuss how a fair and responsible map could be drawn. Both Walker and Risser know the state. And they know what a good map would look like.

Obama's deal with 'nutters' is a bad one

Faced with the threat that tea party Republicans really would steer the United States toward default, Obama had to do something. But instead of bold action, the president engaged in inside-the-beltway bargaining of the most dysfunctional sort.

In cutting a deal with Republicans that places Democratic legacy programs - Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid - at risk while cutting essential programs for working families and the poor, Obama has positioned himself to the right of mainstream Republicans such as Bob Dole and George H.W. Bush. Obama is cutting deals to satisfy Republicans that Britain's banking minister describes as "right-wing nutters."

Reports said the deal would "raise the debt limit by about $2.7 trillion and reduce the deficit by the same amount in two steps. It would cut about $1 trillion in spending up front and set up a select bicameral committee to put together a future deficit-reduction package worth $1.7 trillion to $1.8 trillion. Failure of Congress to pass the future deficit-reduction package would automatically trigger cuts to defense spending and Medicare."

Congressional Progressive Caucus Co-chair Raul Grijalva objected, in particular, to the deal's lack of shared sacrifice.

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"This deal does not even attempt to strike a balance between more cuts for the working people of America and a fairer contribution from millionaires and corporations," the Arizona congressman explained.

The only question is how much damage this deal would do to our nation.

COMPANY: ARIZONA LAND INCOME CORP; ARIZONA CHEM SWEDEN HOLDINGS AB; ONLINE; ARIZONA; ONLINE BREEDBAND BV

NEWS SUBJECT: (Political Parties (1PO73))

REGION: (North America (1NO39); Americas (1AM92); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

OTHER INDEXING: (ARIZONA; CONGRESS; CONGRESSIONAL PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS CO; DEMOCRATIC; ONLINE) (Bob Dole; Failure; Fred Risser; George H.W. Bush; Gov; Obama; Raul Grijalva; Risser; Scott Walker; Walker)

EDITION: ALL

Word Count: 392
8/3/11 WICAPTIMES 26
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Gov. Scott Walker’s Fitzgerald brothers (Senate Majority Leader Scott and Assembly Speaker Jeff) must really want to get rid of state Rep. Andy Jorgensen.

As part of their hyper-partisan redistricting scheme, the Fitzgeralds chopped Jorgensen’s 37th Assembly District into four parts. The formerly compact district that had Jefferson County as its center has been blown apart, with some of Jorgensen’s constituents swept into a new district that extends almost to Milwaukee County. Other constituents are dumped into a Janesville-area district, a Cambridge-area district and an Oconomowoc-area district.

Jorgensen, a working-class Democrat who had proven to be a popular voter-getter in his formerly Republican district, was a prime target of the Fitzgerald brothers. And if it wasn’t enough to obliterate his district for partisan purposes, they tried to finish the job by drawing Jorgensen’s home into an overwhelmingly Republican Whitewater-area district where, should he choose to contest the seat, he would have to challenge high-profile Republican state Rep. Steve Nass.

Jorgensen is already being encouraged to move into a section of his former district where he would have a better chance of winning and continuing to contribute an independent progressive voice to legislative debates.

No matter where he runs, Jorgensen will have to re-establish himself after having his district chopped up in the most partisan redistricting process ever seen in Wisconsin.

Few legislators will face a longer or tougher haul.

But just to make sure that Jorgensen has a hard time of it, the Walker administration’s Department of Motor Vehicles has announced that it plans to close the Fort Atkinson Division of Motor Vehicles center. The Fort Atkinson DMV facility has been Jefferson County’s primary site for obtaining not just licenses and registrations but the photo IDs that — under legislation recently passed by the Republican Legislature and signed by the Republican governor — will be required of Wisconsinites who lack a driver’s license and want to cast ballots.

The shuttering of the Fort Atkinson DMV office is part of a broad plan by Walker’s DMV to shutter offices in communities where they have traditionally been located, shift hours and generally make things more complicated for eligible voters to obtain the required identification.

The confusion is going to play out across the state, as is the intent of the Fitzgerald brothers.
But it certainly comes as no surprise that one of the worst examples of the assault on voting rights for the elderly, young people and rural folks is found in Andy Jorgensen's Jefferson County.

Jorgensen is pushing back. "I question if this could be a calculated move, meant to make it harder for my constituents to get photo IDs that are now required for them to vote," says the legislator.

That's an appropriate question.

What's happening in Jefferson County looks like rank partisanship at its worst, a gaming of the process to confuse and disenfranchise voters who might not cast their ballots in the way that is preferred by the current Assembly speaker and Senate majority leader.

No one is ever going to accuse the Fitzgerals, who famously violated the state's open meetings law in order to secure approval of the governor's anti-labor law, of embracing the spirit or the practice of transparency.

But the targeting of Andy Jorgensen and his constituents is transparently obvious and blatant in its disregard for the most basic democratic values.

---- INDEX REFERENCES ----

COMPANY: FITZGERALDS; DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES

NEWS SUBJECT: (Government (1GO80); Legislation (1LE97); Regulatory Affairs (1RE51))

REGION: (Wisconsin (1WI54); U.S. Midwest Region (1MI19); North America (1NO39); Americas (1AM92); USA (1US73))

Language: EN

OTHER INDEXING: (DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES; FITZGERALDS; SENATE) (Andy Jorgensen; Assembly; Assembly Speaker Jeff; Gov; Jorgensen; Leader Scott; Republican; Republican Whitewater; Scott Walker; Steve Nass; TARGETING JORGENSEN; Walker)

EDITION: ALL

Word Count: 566
8/3/11 WICAPTIMES 27
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Every 10 years, legislative and congressional district boundaries are redrawn to account for population shifts reflected in the U.S. Census. It's an important process that merits months of public deliberation and scrutiny.

But that's not what happens in Wisconsin. Our state's redistricting process is handled almost completely out of public view by the party in power and then, once challenged, it heads to the courts.

The plan just approved by the Legislature to remap Wisconsin's political boundaries starting with the 2012 fall elections was drawn up in secret during much of the first half of 2011 by law firms hired by Republican legislative leaders at a cost to taxpayers of at least $350,000.

This plan was publicly released Friday, July 8, and got a single public hearing on July 13 in Madison. Then it was promptly passed by the Legislature and sent on to Gov. Scott Walker to be signed into law.

The process moved so fast that the Legislature had to change a state law that prohibited it from redrawing legislative and congressional district lines before local governments complete redistricting for city and county elected officials. Communities that have already completed this task must redo their maps to accommodate the state.

No matter which party is handling it, redistricting in Wisconsin is done mostly in secret by those whose jobs depend on the outcome. Other states do it differently.

Wisconsin is among 28 states that rely on the Legislature to handle redistricting and the
governor to approve or veto the final product. Nine states have commissions whose members are selected by the governor and other elected officials, and 13 states use a hybrid method where the Legislature and a commission or advisory council work together.

In Iowa, often cited as a model for redistricting reform, the state's nonpartisan Legislative Services Bureau draws three plans based on population equality, compactness, contiguity and the goal of keeping counties and cities intact. A five-member citizen advisory committee provides information to the bureau and conducts at least three public hearings.

The Iowa legislature has picked one of the nonpartisan agency's plans ever since this process was started in 1980, and none of the plans has been challenged in court. In signing this year's plan, Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad said his state's redistricting process "really gives the people an opportunity to choose their congressmen and their representatives and senators in a competitive system that isn't really designed to skew it in favor of one party or the other."

Another model of openness is Colorado, which uses an 11-member commission. Its members are picked by the General Assembly, governor and Supreme Court chief justice.

Between May and July this year, the commission held 11 public meetings and hearings in Denver and it scheduled 20 hearings around the state in August. The public may sign up for email updates, and summaries and audio recordings of the meetings are available.

In California, a 14-member Citizens Redistricting Commission consists of five Republicans, five Democrats and four independents. Its website includes interactive maps of proposed districts and offers a video that tells citizens why they should get involved. The commission scheduled more than 60 public meetings or hearings between April and August.

So Wisconsin has a number of models to change the way redistricting is handled. A good place to start is to find one that opens up the process to the people it affects.

Michael Buelow is research director for the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign. He wrote this Your Right to Know column for the Freedom of Information Council, a nonprofit group dedicated to open government.

----- INDEX REFERENCES -----

COMPANY: SUPREME COURT OF NSW

NEWS SUBJECT: (Legislation (1LE97); Population Demographics (1PO77); Government (1GO80); Forecasts (1FO11); Local Government (1LO75); Regulatory Affairs (1RE51))

REGION: (Wisconsin (1WI54); Iowa (1IO85); North America (1NO39); U.S. Midwest Region

1/9/2012
August 3, 2011

Inside The Tea Party’s Rising Influence

TERRY GROSS, host:

This is FRESH AIR. I’m Terry Gross.

The battle over the debt ceiling may be over, but Congress remains deeply divided. My guest, Robert Draper, has been reporting on the debt ceiling battle for the book he’s writing about the House of Representatives. Last month he profiled the Republican whip in a New York Times magazine article titled "How Kevin McCarthy Wrangles the Tea Party in Washington."

Draper points out that the 87 new Republican members of the House constitute more than a third of the 239-member Republican caucus and are the reason the GOP is now in control of the House.
Nearly 40 percent of them are self-styled, quote, "citizen politicians" who have never held office and rode into Washington on the Tea Party wave. Draper says they and their Tea Party backers constitute the most formidable power block on Capitol Hill. Draper is a contributing writer for the New York Times Magazine and is the author of the 2007 book "Dead Certain: The Presidency of George W. Bush."

Robert Draper, welcome back to FRESH AIR.

Mr. ROBERT DRAPER (Author): Thanks for having me.

GROSS: So John Boehner says he's happy in that Republicans got 98 percent of what they wanted. How would you describe the mood on the Democratic side and the Republican side of the House now?

Mr. DRAPER: Well, let's start with what I think would be the victors' side, which would be the House Republicans. And they are taking, I think, a well-deserved victory lap while the Democrats are in a state of near total dejection.

I think what's clear - Boehner may be exaggerating for effect to say that they got 98 percent of what they wanted. They got a lot of cuts. They managed to keep revenues off the table in this debt ceiling deal. But most of all, I think what they've done is dramatically shift the ethos in Washington.

You know, you'll recall that in January of this year, President Obama's State of the Union address talked about reinvesting in America so as to quote-unquote win the future. That's where we were at the - at least where the Democrats wanted us to be at the end of January. Six months later, all that's been talked about is how much and where to slash government spending.

So that's a victory for the Republicans, but to paraphrase Benjamin Franklin, it's a victory if you can keep it. And we can get to that in a minute.

But as for the Democrats, I think the sense of anger and betrayal and dejection was best personified by the chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, Emanuel Cleaver, who tweeted a couple of days ago that this debt deal was, in his view, a sugar-coated Satan sandwich.

Now, what you need to know about Cleaver is that he is this extremely mild-mannered guy who almost never speaks up at Democratic caucuses, very much sort of keeps his cards close to his vest, and who's a minister and in fact gives invocations in Democratic caucuses.

But he's also represented the Congressional Black Caucus in meetings with the president and clearly feels like his coalition, his constituents, were sold down the river by a president who - and I think this sentiment is viewed across the boards by Democrats - a
president who was outfoxed at the negotiating table.

So it's not just a feeling that we lost. It's a feeling that we're not sure if we can trust the titular head of our party.

GROSS: So a lot of distrust now between Democrats and the president.

Mr. DRAPER: And President Obama, yes.

GROSS: So you said - you used the quote this is a victory if you can keep it - with the Republicans. What are you referring to about not keeping it?

Mr. DRAPER: Well, what I'm referring to is whether or not they can recognize a victory when it's in their grasp. There were in fact a number of defections in the Republican ranks from this bill, and about half of the people who voted against the bill who are Republicans were freshmen.

Now, many of them did vote for it but were not satisfied with it, and the context in which we need to view what took place with the debt ceiling deal is what happened several months beforehand, when the House was coming up with a continuing resolution that would fund the government through the middle of September.

And House Republicans were pushing for $100 billion in cuts from what President Obama had proposed. They didn't get that, and they felt that ultimately, ultimately it was a very fatiguing ordeal. It lasted months, and they wanted to get it past them and move on to bigger issues such as the budget.

But they felt that they had not been well-served at the negotiating table by Speaker Boehner. So it remains to be seen whether this chapter ends with particularly the freshmen Republicans having more confidence in Speaker Boehner or if there's going to continue to be this tension within the Republican conference between the more senior members in leadership and freshmen who - many of whom came to town not really caring whether they got re-elected, feeling that if they did not do the people's will, they would deservedly be thrown out and replaced by someone who would, who feel a sense of mission and feel quite impatient.

GROSS: One thing that kind of baffled me was that I understand, like, FreedomWorks and other groups like that were pressuring the Tea Party Republican freshmen to hold firm and not compromise. But at the same time, we have groups like the Chamber of Commerce, which endorsed a lot of Republicans, and other business groups that have traditionally backed Republicans who it seems to me would have a vested interest in saving the economy, in preventing America from defaulting, in preventing America's credit rating from being lowered because that would - seems - it seems that would be very bad for business.

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So at the last minute, the Chamber of Commerce started making public statements and exerting pressure, but I was surprised that there weren't more business groups like that earlier making public statements and publicly pressuring Republicans to prevent America from defaulting.

Mr. DRAPER: As best as I can tell, Terry, it's because - they didn't do it earlier because they didn't think it would be necessary earlier. I mean, there - it is true that a lot of these freshmen campaigned vowing not to raise the debt ceiling under any circumstances, but I think that a lot of these business groups assumed that once they got into office, once they were educated by House leadership, that they would come around very quickly on that.

That proved not to be the case, and a rather dramatic thing happened about 10, 11 days ago, something like that. A week and a half before the vote on the Boehner plan, then following that, what ultimately became the debt ceiling deal, in the House Republican conference they brought in an economist, a Republican economist named Jay Powell(ph), who is a specialist on debt ceiling issues.

And he gave a presentation to show everyone in the Republican conference just what would happen with the money after August 2nd. He basically did a step-by-step on how - demonstrating quite graphically how money would run out, how there were not only no guarantees that, say, the troops would be paid, but a great likelihood that they would not. And that this guy, Jay Powell, was brought in when he was is a measure of how concerned the Republican leadership was that a lot of the more conservative members, certainly including the freshmen, weren't buying the notion that a default was going to be a grave thing, and they certainly weren't buying the Tim Geithner August 2nd deadline.

And I think that part of what crept into this was a view that if the White House says it, it must be untrue, and if anyone else echoes the White House, then they're essentially, you know, in cahoots with the White House.

And indeed this guy Jay Powell got a harsh reception from some Republicans in that conference who thought that his figures were biased. He's a Bush Republican. And so, yeah, I think it took a very long time for a lot of these guys to come on board, and it was not so much that they were default deniers, that they believed that nothing would happen, but they believed that whatever would happen would not be nearly as egregious as the White House was painting it.

GROSS: Well, that leads to something I've been wondering all along. Did the Republicans play an incredible game of brinksmanship, or were there enough members in, like, say, the Republican House who really didn't care about the possibility of not raising the debt ceiling, who really didn't care about America defaulting on our debt, who really didn't care about a lowering of the credit rating?

Mr. DRAPER: Well, I think that the vast majority of House Republicans did care. They did see the consequences of failing to raise the debt ceiling, whether those consequences

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would come into effect on August 2nd or two weeks later or a month later.

Nonetheless, they had twinned the devastation of failing to raise the debt ceiling with the devastation that they believed would arise if significant financial reforms did not take place, significant reforms in the way government goes about its business spending-wise.

And you heard that in a lot of these Republican conferences, where every time - and this was done partly as a negotiating tool. I mean, it's - though John Boehner had very early on described failure to raise the debt ceiling, he described this in a conference as the equivalent of Armageddon, and Paul Ryan believed this as well, the budget committee chairman, Kevin McCarthy, the majority whip, and the majority leader, Eric Cantor, they all believed this. But they also believed that to start out by saying, well, look, obviously we have to raise the debt ceiling would be tantamount to forfeiting their negotiating position.

All along, they seemed to realize that President Obama was not going to allow the United States of America, on his watch, to lose its AAA rating. He would not allow America to default on its obligations. And that essentially became the brinksmanship, as you've described it.

I think there was a lot of sweating near the end, but I think all along there was a belief on the part of the Republicans that President Obama would play ball at the very end because he would have no choice.

GROSS: Do you think that President Obama had more negotiating room than he took advantage of?

Mr. DRAPER: It's hard to say. I mean, when you go back to, for example, the Biden talks, which were sort of - there were, as you know, several iterations of talks, and beginning in early May a group would meet in the Blair House across the street from the White House, headed by Vice President Joe Biden, and it had some representatives from House Republicans and Senate Republicans, as well as the same for Democrats.

And in these negotiations they would talk theoretically about revenues, but the Republicans would never specify. And when Eric Cantor was asked, okay, so we have talked about, you know, corporate subsidies or subsidies for oil companies and closing loopholes, which of these are you least unwilling to go forward with, which of them do you hate the least, Cantor would never commit. While at the same time, the Democrats were discussing some things that at least in theory they'd be willing to face up to regarding Medicare, not Medicare benefits but other aspects of Medicare and Medicaid, and Social Security.

And so the Republicans never showed their cards. I should say, by the way, that the Democrats showed a little bit of their cards sort of at the insistence of Vice President Biden, who wanted to keep the negotiations going, was sort of - and was hoping that this would encourage the Republicans.

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Now, as to whether or not President Obama could have leveraged a stronger deal for the Democrats that would have put revenues on the table, it's hard to say. All we know is that at least the House Republicans didn't seem to be giving an inch on that.

GROSS: You're writing a book about the House. So I'm wondering if watching how the House dealt with, you know, passage of this debt ceiling deal, if a lot of members of the House now admire President Obama for his willingness to compromise with them or if they just see him as weak and easy to take advantage of.

Mr. DRAPER: I haven't seen any sign of admiration for President Obama in the Republican camps. If anything, there is a belief that President Obama was not always good on his word at the negotiating table.

There was this suggestion that another $400 billion in revenue should be considered that President Obama sort of sprung on Speaker Boehner, which he felt was untenable, given how - the difficulties he was having in his Republican conference to convince them to accept any kind of revenue package.

No, I don't see that any of them have viewed Obama's willingness to compromise as a virtue. I think that they recognize it, but they don't see this as something to be admired or even to be emulated. I think that if anything they've calculated it as a kind of weakness.

GROSS: If you're just joining us, my guest is Robert Draper, and he's a contributing writer to the New York Times Magazine. He's writing a book about the House of Representatives. He recently profiled in the New York Times Magazine the House majority whip, Kevin McCarthy.

Let's take a short break here, and then we'll talk some more about the House and the debt ceiling deal. This is FRESH AIR.

(Soundbite of music)

GROSS: My guest is Robert Draper, and he's writing a book about the House of Representatives. He's been reporting on what happened in the House during the debt ceiling deal. He's a contributing writer to the New York Times Magazine and in July profiled Kevin McCarthy, the House majority whip. The article in the New York Times magazine was titled "How Kevin McCarthy Wrangles the Tea Party in Washington."

I'm interested in the split, if there is one, between the leadership in the House, the Republican leadership in the House, and the people at the far end of the Tea Party, the people at the Tea Party who voted against this deal, who are totally unwilling to compromise.

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I mean, the people who won't compromise, some of them are people who don't see themselves as career politicians. They see themselves as here to take a stand and never compromise.

Boehner, who is the speaker of the House, I mean he's not only a career politician, he had tears in his eyes when he became the House speaker because it was such a kind of lifelong goal for him.

So do you have any sense of what it's been like for him, a career politician, to deal with people in his party, under his leadership, who refuse to compromise?

Mr. DRAPER: Well, it's been a challenge, but he's also viewed it as an opportunity. You know, for example, a few months ago, well before the debt ceiling debate began in let's say May, previous to that, Boehner was telling colleagues who are close to him that he viewed the impending debt ceiling debate as an historic opportunity to force dramatic concessions from a Democratic White House.

So he from the outset saw the Tea Party freshmen as something that he could leverage. Now, that does not mean that they have not given him heartburn from time to time, and there was a moment during the continuing resolution debate when a number of the short-term continuing resolutions were being voted against by a lot of freshmen that he stood up in a conference and he said he felt like he had been abandoned, causing one of the freshman, Raul Labrador from Idaho, to say excuse me, I feel like we are the ones being abandoned.

And so there has been this - there has been this tension. It has inured to Boehner's benefit from time to time, and I think also Boehner's temperament has very much aided him. You know, he's not a hothead. He tends to be very, very patient. Actually, temperamentally, he has much more in common with Barack Obama than either of them would care to admit.

And - but at the same time, he is aware that if he doesn't pay attention to the Tea Party freshmen, that he's not going to be speaker for very long. He, after all, was around - Boehner was elected in 1990, among the so-called Gang of Seven, these sort of seven rabble-rousers, reformers, and Boehner himself fashioned himself a reformer back then, anti-earmark, et cetera.

In 1994, Gingrich came into power, the sort of so-called Gingrich revolution. The Republicans took control of the House for the first time in 40 years. And Boehner became one of the House leaders. He saw just a few years after that how the back-bench members of the House, of the Republican House, revolted against Gingrich and effectively forced him out of the speakership.

Boehner is aware that that sort of thing can happen, and he has to be concerned about it.

You know, on the other side you have these freshmen who, as you've said, Terry, are not of the mood to compromise on things. They - in fact, I was at a town hall with one of them, a
Texas congressman named Blake Farenthold, and Farenthold mentioned the word compromise, and immediately someone stood up, while others were sort of yelling, someone stood up and said we didn't send you there to compromise.

And you know, that kind of sentiment has really resonated, you know, throughout the freshman class. They feel like compromise is a dirty word, that there's no real - you know, that doesn't necessarily mean that they view the Democrats as the enemy, but I think they do view sort of backroom deals as anathema to what brought them to Washington to begin with.

GROSS: Do you think some of them are changing now that they've been in office for a few months and actually seeing how politics get done, how bills get passed?

Mr. DRAPER: Sure. Some of them - they're evolving in different directions. It's interesting. Of course, you know, some of these congressmen, freshman congressmen, have districts that are along the Mississippi River. The Mississippi River has undergone, you know, terrible flooding over the last several months.

And so now those congressmen have become very reliant on federal aid and federal agencies such as FEMA in ways they would have never imagined before.

You also have, for example, Sean Duffy, who - from Wisconsin, a former county prosecutor and former lumberjack and former star of the proto-reality TV show "The Real World." Duffy occupies this - a congressional seat in Wisconsin that for 40 years was held by Democratic appropriations chairman David Obey.

Duffy won with huge Tea Party support in 2010, but he has since come to realize that his district is still a Democratic district. It may be kind of a blue-dog Democratic district, meaning more fiscally conservative and - but still, you know, with a strong labor component to it.

And so he has had to - he has had to traverse this political minefield when it comes to things like the funding of health care, public radio for that matter, and other benefits.

You also see someone like Renee Ellmers from North Carolina, who came to Washington, D.C. as a total outsider. I mean, even the Republicans didn't know what to do with her. The national Republican - she's a nurse, a former intensive care nurse, who decided to run. The National Republican Congressional Committee didn't give her any money, didn't help her out, and so she came in without any connections at all.

But she has - and won largely on the, you know, on the strength of Tea Party support, but she has since then fallen in line with leadership, has become a favorite of leadership, is a ubiquitous Fox TV presence, and you know, stands a good chance of becoming the Debbie Wasserman-Schultz of the Republican Party, which no one would have predicted.

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But you also see — you know, I mentioned Blake Farenthold before. Farenthold came in with a willingness to compromise, and now, you know, he feels like that when he comes back after the summer, that he'll be doing far less of compromising.

And it's a very — this group of 87 freshmen is anything but monolithic. And they all have their peculiarities owing to their particular districts.

GROSS: Robert Draper will be back in the second half of the show. He's a contributing writer for the New York Times Magazine and is writing a book about the House of Representatives. I'm Terry Gross, and this is FRESH AIR.

(Soundbite of music)

GROSS: This is FRESH AIR. I'm Terry Gross back with Robert Draper, who has been covering the debt ceiling battle for the book he's writing on the House of Representatives. Draper profiled the House majority whip in a New York Times Magazine article last month the titled "How Kevin McCarthy Wrangles the Tea Party in Washington." Draper is a contributing writer for the magazine. He's also the author of the 2007 book "Dead Certain: The Presidency of George W. Bush."

In your profile of Kevin McCarthy, you wrote that on the night of President Obama's inauguration, McCarthy told Republicans let's not act like the minority. Let's challenge them on every single bill and on every single campaign. Did that kind of lay down part of the strategy that was used in the debt ceiling deal?

Mr. DRAPER: Yes it did. I mean they — it was strength in numbers and the refusal to give any ground. And where we saw it first was just a few days after Kevin McCarthy uttered that, which was — he said that on the night of Obama's inauguration. And it wasn't long after that the vote on the stimulus took place and all Republicans in the House voted against it and they stood very strong in opposition to it and they believed that was a statement.

Thereafter, McCarthy is this interesting guy. He's only been in the House for a couple of terms himself and he has a very sunny disposition, kind of a quintessential Californian stereotype, but he's an extremely competitive guy. And he has — he along with Eric Cantor, have really, really held the line in the opposition. They've been very aware of how indisposed the freshmen are to any kind of compromise and they've decided to use that as leverage.

And so, yes, I think that the predicate was laid very, very early on that this was going to be a winning, that this was going to be a winning Republican strategy.

GROSS: In your profile of McCarthy you wrote that he tried to convince the Tea Party members of the House to go from a position of no on the debt ceiling to a position of yes
if. If what? And what was McCarthy's strategy of convincing the Tea Party people who were refusing to compromise?

Mr. DRAPER: Well, the whip does not possess the tools that previous whips did. In the past you could induce someone to vote a particular way by awarding them an earmark or something for their district. I don't think any — not only are earmarks banned now so that can't be done, but I also don't think that even doing something like saying we'll give you a new committee assignment or something would pass muster because there are vigilant, you know, bloggers who would immediately say this guy sold out his vote for — in exchange for X, Y, Z.

So instead what McCarthy has had to do is to bring them into the process early. And he's had these listening sessions where they bring in experts and they sort of brainstorm and he basically invests them in the legislative process.

During freshman orientation in the middle of November, just a couple of weeks after all these guys were elected, McCarthy did an informal poll and all but I think one or two were willing to raise the debt ceiling under any conditions, so he knew he had his work cut out for him. And so then it became conditions based.

And they began to — the one condition that came up over and over was a balanced budget amendment and that seemed to be an unlikely one, given that it would need to not only pass both the House and the Senate, but it would also have to be passed by a majority of, a super majority of the United States.

But he ultimately decided to turn that into a virtue. He insisted on and got a balanced budget amendment brought to the floor in the form of this cut, cap and balance. And that basically staked out a Republican position that this is really what we want. And, you know, though in the end the deal that was cut was cut with — Boehner signed on late but it was hatched basically by Vice President Biden and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell.

I don't think that they would've gotten to that point had the Republicans in the House not staked out such an un-equivocating position in the far right. And that was something that McCarthy very much enabled.

GROSS: So if McCarthy was the chief recruiter for the midterm elections, are many of the freshmen beholden to him?

Mr. DRAPER: Beholden is not the right word. But they do have a bond with him, Terry, to the degree that they do not with Boehner. And it isn't limited to just what took place on the campaign trail. The whip's job is to sort of, you know, grow the vote by constantly having your, constantly touching members as the verbiage goes. And so it's McCarthy who has more day-to-day contact with the members and what they're thinking, what they're up to, what their needs are than anybody else.
And McCarthy thinks more like they do because he's a little bit younger. He's not a Capitol Hill fixture like John Boehner. He also actually lives in - he sleeps in his office like a lot of those guys do, and they all in the afternoon and evening time hangout in the majority whip's office in the Capitol. And to the point where, as I mentioned in the story, the panorama almost looks like a frequent flyer lounge of all these guys in their sort of, you know, disheveled coats and ties sipping on glasses of wine and looking at Fox News and reading briefing papers.

And so McCarthy has become the nexus of all activity for them. And that proved to be crucial in the debt ceiling debate because he really did have to work a lot of these guys over. But working them over no longer is the form of coercion or even inducement but instead talking them through what their needs were an in turn explaining, you know, how badly they were needed for this particular vote.

GROSS: So Kevin McCarthy, who you profiled in the New York Times Magazine...

Mr. DRAPER: Yeah.

GROSS: ...and is the Republican whip in the House, he lives in his office. What does that represent to him, the importance of living in his office? And there's a bunch of freshmen living in their office now. So how has that changed the climate in the House to have all these...

Mr. DRAPER: Well, a lot of freshmen are doing it because they don't want to be, you know, attached to, you know, Washington. They don't want to own a piece of real estate and become Washington. Others are doing it because, frankly, they don't have much money.

Kevin McCarthy does it really out of practicality. He works all the time in the whip's office and it's where a lot of the freshmen are. And so essentially he just sort of crashes, you know, where he is.

I think that what it has meant is that there is this kind of squadron of freshmen who all cling together in the evening time because they see each other in the House gym in the morning when they're taking their showers and exercising. They see each other basically before they go to sleep and coalitions have formed as a result of that. And so it's been helpful to McCarthy also to be very, very close to that action and to be able to influence, you know, whatever those coalitions are up to.

GROSS: Do the offices have a dorm-like atmosphere now?

Mr. DRAPER: Not exactly. I mean you do see these guys pad out of their dorms, you know, early in the morning, you know, holding their toothbrushes. But it's not like there are, you know, food fights or loud music or anything like that.
GROSS: In talking about the Republican whip, Kevin McCarthy, and how he uses his persuasive abilities to get people in line, before the Boehner bill, the bill that failed, McCarthy showed a clip from the Ben Affleck film "The Town," which is about bank robbers and Jeremy Renner is the co-star. In the scene that he played, Affleck says to Renner, I need your help. I can't tell you what it is. You can never ask me about it later and we're going to hurt some people. And then Renner says whose car are we going to take?

So, you know, that got played on like late-night comedy shows and people were really picking up on the we are going to hurt some people line. So do you have any sense of how that played among Republicans and how the clip played and what McCarthy intended to communicate by playing it?

Mr. DRAPER: Yeah. Well, sure. For starters, they loved it. They loved the clip though it did not ultimately bring a gale force of affirmation toward the Boehner deal at that point in fact. At that stage what was being called the Boehner deal was, barely had more than 100 Republican votes and it didn't get much more as a result of that. For entertainment value and sort of saliency about teamwork it got a lot of applause.

McCarthy does this a lot. Not so much the clip, though the NRCC sometimes puts in clips like from the "Gladiator" and others to begin Republican conferences. But McCarthy's ongoing theme has been about teamwork. And he constantly uses, you know, he'll sort of trades one metaphor for another. When he runs out of them then he falls back on the movie "Braveheart." But basically McCarthy's whole deal has been to sort of promote team unity, and particularly, again, amongst freshmen who've come to town with no particular allegiances to the speaker or even to the Republican Party as a whole.

But no, there was no, you know, consternation, no handwringing in House Republican circles that oh, this notion that someone might get hurt is a bad thing to say. I mean they got the joke if others didn't.

GROSS: And the joke was?

Mr. DRAPER: Well, the joke was that, you know, we're going to deal a hurt to the Democrats. We're going to, you know, we're going to be - that this is a package that's going to be really, really tough on what Democrats want but we're going to hold firm and we're going to stick together.

GROSS: So how do you think the debt ceiling deal the way it played out affected the relationship between House Speaker John Boehner and Republican leader Eric Cantor in the House?

Mr. DRAPER: Their relationship has been tenuous to begin with because Cantor clearly wants to be speaker of the House some day. And Cantor also has been far more aggressive in - even though for example, Cantor had asked for earmarks in the past and Boehner has always been against earmarks. It was Cantor who insisted on an earmark moratorium back in the fall of 2010 when Boehner himself was only talking about revisiting the subject of banning

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So Boehner is ever aware of Cantor's ambitions. And those ambitions, of course, extend beyond the majority leader himself to his entire staff who would also like to see him at the top, and so there's always been tension between them. But they worked this deal pretty well together. There were some moments along the way where for example, Eric Cantor learned while he was involved in Biden talks that Boehner was having meetings at the White House. That apparently got him upset.

And there were also times where Cantor was in active dialogue with the Republican Study Committee, which is the sort of in-house conservative organ for the Republicans and which was very much opposed to the Boehner deal that was being struck in these past weeks because they didn't feel like it went far enough. Cantor was in constant dialogue with them and that had some of Boehner's allies quite nervous about what Cantor's intentions might be.

But I think they came out of this okay. I mean they again, there's plenty for the Republican leadership to feel good about. I mean they don't have wrapped around their collar the consequences of failing to raise the debt ceiling. They don't have a default deal. But instead they have this package of deep cuts, which frankly are not as deep as first appear and the conservatives who voted against it are certainly mindful of that. But still basically, as I said at the beginning, they now have - they're now very much the definers of what the ethos in Washington is and so there's plenty to celebrate all the way around.

GROSS: If you're just joining us, my guest is Robert Draper and he is a contributing writer to The New York Times Magazine. He recently had an article about how Kevin McCarthy wrangles the Tea Party in Washington. McCarthy is the Republican whip in the House. Draper is also the author of "Dead Certain: The Presidency of George W. Bush." He's now writing a book about the House of Representatives.

Let's take a short break here and then we'll talk some more. This is FRESH AIR.

(Soundbite of music)

GROSS: If you're just joining us, my guest is Robert Draper. He's a contributing writer to The New York Times Magazine. He recently profiled Kevin McCarthy, who is the Republican whip in the House. He's also the author of "Dead Certain: The Presidency of George W. Bush."

Let's talk a little bit about Grover Norquist, who is the head of Americans for Tax Reform. This is a group that is basically opposed to any form of taxation. And Grover Norquist is famous among other things for the no tax pledge that he's gotten most Republicans in office to sign. All but six of the 240 Republican members of the House, and all but seven of the 47 Republican senators have signed the pledge. Norquist came up with the no tax pledge in 1986. And I'm wondering how much of the no compromise, we're against

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taxes position of Republicans has to do with having signed this pledge and how much the pledge is kind of coincidental to the fact that they believe in not raising taxes and lowering taxes.

Mr. DRAPER: I think you phrased it right in the last part of what you said, Terry, that is to say I think that it's coincidental to it. But I have heard almost no one reference Grover Norquist among a House Republicans except when they're saying that they frankly don't care whether they sign the pledge or not, that their decisions have no basis and they've said that convincingly.

I think that, you know, far more of worry to them is that if they do anything that would be perceived as heading towards the center or God for bid, the left, that they will face a primary opponent. And there are already some members of the so-called Tuesday Group, the moderate Republicans in the House, who are facing such challenges. And those again, are not triggered by a sudden disavowal of Grover Norquist tax pledge.

I mean I do think that the ethos that Norquist is part of is influential on the Hill. But I don't think, I think that breaking Grover Norquist's pledge is the least of their worries.

GROSS: What kind of postmortems have you heard Democrats in the House doing?

Mr. DRAPER: Well, I think that I actually spent yesterday on the Hill talking to a lot of Democrats. And I think they're trying to find something positive to say about this deal but basically they feel a real disappointment in it and more profoundly with President Obama. What they want, if there's any victory for them is that they've managed to keep as a result of this deal the politically winning issue of Medicare. That this deal does not involve tinkering with Medicare entitlements, at least it doesn't seem to.

Now there's this so-called trigger in it that if this supercommittee set up as a result of this deal fails to produce a certain number of $1.2 trillion in reductions then there is an across-the-board slashing of funds for everything from defense programs to entitlements. But the Democrats for now at least can feel sanguine that the issue that they believed is the reason why they picked up an extra district in New York, Medicare is something that they can ride possibly to victory.

And what we're hearing and seeing, I mean you saw it in the news conference yesterday after President Obama talked about this deal that had just been passed in the Senate in which he was just signing, that right after that there was a pivot to a press conference that Nancy Pelosi had, the Democratic minority leader. And all she did was talk about jobs. And that's what Obama will talk about now too. And so the problem, of course, for Democrats is there's really nothing they can do in the way that they want to do it relating to jobs. They can't pass a mini stimulus. There is no other sort of federal project that could possibly pass muster in the House. And so all they can really do is sort of talk about initiatives and highlight the Republicans failure to act on those initiatives.

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Now to some degree I think that's going to work pretty well for them since basically the Republican's view is that the best way to create jobs is for the government to stay the hell out of the way and to create basically a climate that's amenable to job creation. That's a lot less tangible and it's a lot harder to point to positive results than it would be to establish, you know, a federal works project, for example. So the Democrats will be working the Republicans over pretty heavily over this. But how well they'll be able to pivot after this defeat remains to be seen.

GROSS: Now you are in the process of writing a book about the House of Representatives. Why is that your new subject?

Mr. DRAPER: Well, I've decided when I saw the midterm elections that the House was now going to become relevant. That it was going to be the point of the spear for the Republican Party against the Obama administration. And even more to the point, that with these 87 freshmen who are coming in, many of whom did not possess legislative experience, many of whom felt they were on a sense of mission and really didn't care whether they got reelected or not, that there was going to be even less compromise. That this was going to be sort of divided government on steroids.

And so that we would be seeing, you know, the House has historically been - it was set up to be the institution that best captured the passions of the American public. And we've seen that now, you know, to the Nth degree as sort of there's been one wave election after the next. And it may be that the period that we saw most recently until 1994, where the Democrats held onto power for 40 years will never happen anymore; that there will be this constant switching between Democrats and Republicans as the emotional spasms of the American public are exacerbated by the blogosphere and, you know, what they see on cable television. And that the changing of hands in the House of Representatives will be Exhibit A of that. And so I thought it was an interesting moment to sort of capture that. And frankly, I thought also that, you know, for entertainment value the House, which has always been a lot more bawdy, a lot more raucous than the Senate would now even more closely resemble the World Wrestling Federation.

GROSS: Well, give us an example from the past few weeks that you think more closely resembles the World Wrestling Federation.

Mr. DRAPER: Actually, to me one of the more remarkable distinctions between the House and the Senate took place about a week and a half ago when a number of Tea Party freshman decided when to Cut, Cap And Balance Bill was passed in the House in a strictly party line vote and then moved over to the Senate. These Tea Party freshman, about 15 of them or so, decided they were going to march over to the Senate and look the Senate in the eye and defeats senators, to talk to senators and say, you know, you need to vote for this balanced budget amendment, it's important.

Now, of course, the Senate is controlled by Democrats and so that was unlikely to take place. But to see like these Republicans who came over from the House floor which has an atmosphere that is more like a high school cafeteria, you know, during lunchtime, to go
over then to the Senate that is almost like a priesthood, incredibly quiet where everyone is sort of murmuring. And these freshmen Republicans, who seemed almost like these, you know, uncouths who had walked, who managed to barge into a country club, then, you know, stood there, you know, in the back and some of them approached some of the senators but it was clear that they were far from their element.

In the other way though, the House, which is always, you know, been much noisier and all of that, you hear all of this chanting and booing and hissing. It's always been that way since 1789 when the House decided to throw its doors open to the public, something that the Senate didn't do for many years but is that much more so now and the contrast was particularly evident a week and a half ago.


We'll talk more after a break.

This is FRESH AIR.

(Soundbite of music)


So in the end, in the whole process of the debt ceiling deal, who held the most power? Was it the Tea Party?

Mr. DRAPER: Yes. Yeah. They didn't get all that they wanted and so the victory they got is maybe one that they won't keep. But they managed - I mean there's an awful lot of quote/unquote "sensible," you know, "people," Republicans, conservatives, independents, all sorts of economists who said that any sustainable course that we take, economically speaking, is going to have to involve revenues. The Tea Party wouldn't hear of it. The House conservatives wouldn't hear of it. And low and behold revenues, which I think the House leadership might have but for the strong presence of the Tea Party and the Tea Party freshman consider lo and behold that stayed off the table from the beginning all the way to the end. So with that as a benchmark then certainly that's a result of the Tea Party's influence.

GROSS: You use that World Wrestling Federation analogy - that sometimes the House looks more like a World Wrestling Federation. Sometimes it seems like the House is so divided and then America is so divided. I wouldn't call it a civil war but that there are divisions that are getting deeper and deeper and that America is getting more and more
divided, and that is just so look so evident in how the debt ceiling deal finally got done.

So having spent a lot of time, you know, watching the House for the book that you're writing about the House, how deep do you think the divisions are in America now?

Mr. DRAPER: Well, I think they're very deep and getting deeper every time a congressional map is redrawn, Terry. Because what redistricting has done, and this is sort of the big untold story - I mean people write about redistricting, but basically it has turned America into two Americans, Democratic Party America and Republican Party America; that every time there is a census and then on the basis of that congressional districts are revisited, that whoever happens to be in power in particular states draws these districts that are most favorable to them.

And in this case most of, in most cases the states are controlled by Republicans. And so they will redden the districts, all the districts they can. And then in part by doing that, what Democratic votes are left over they dump into a district that was already Democratic to begin with and make it that much more blue. So what we're seeing in part with these Tea Party freshman and with others who for that matter, safe district members from the Congressional Black Caucus, are those people who are calcified or their worldview is codified by the district that they inhabit. And so basically what that does is leave no appetite for compromise because you have politicians who come to Washington who come from districts that are much more ideologically rigid as a result of redistricting than would've been in the past. So I think going forward, no, I don't see any increased appetite for compromise. If anything I see a formula that's going to further polarize America.

GROSS: Robert, do you have any idea when your book about the House is going to be published?

Mr. DRAPER: Yes. It'll be out in May of next year.

GROSS: Well, I look forward to reading it. Thank you so much for talking with us.

Mr. DRAPER: My pleasure.

GROSS: Robert Draper is a contributing writer The New York Times Magazine. You can find a link to his magazine article on House Majority Whip Kevin McCarthy on our website, freshair.npr.org, where you can also download podcasts of our show.

I'm Terry Gross.

We'll close with the song from Tony Bennett who is 85 today. We wish him a happy birthday.