

# Congress exits after a display of dysfunction

This Congress is one of history's least productive.

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New York Times

WASHINGTON—House and Senate lawmakers were scrambling to leave town Friday night for a five-week recess with a failure to address the refugee crisis at the southern border, only the latest indignity of a year that may redefine congressional dysfunction.

The 113th Congress this week took another step toward ignominy as one of the least productive, most divided in history. Vocal anti-immigration Republicans were empowered, virtually dictating terms of two House border security bills even after party leaders had spent much of the year trying to marginalize them. The results were bills with no chance of becoming law, and ones diametrically opposed to the direction party elders had advised Republicans to go after their losses in 2012.

One measure, which would provide \$694 million in emergency funds to address the border crisis, passed Friday night in a 223-189 vote. It would also expedite the deportation of Central American children and bolster the National Guard's presence at the Mexican border. The House also passed a bill that would phase out temporary legal status for undocumented child immigrants. Both bills are unlikely to be considered by the Senate.

## Gutting the legislation

"I was a 'hell, no,' and now I can be for this bill today," said Rep. Michele Bachmann, R-Minn. "We completely gutted the bill" the leaders wrote.

In the Senate, Harry Reid of



J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE • Associated Press

Rep. Michele Bachmann, R-Minn., was surrounded by reporters on Capitol Hill after a meeting Friday on the border crisis.

Nevada, the majority leader, has virtually shut down the legislative process rather than subject politically vulnerable Democrats to Republican amendments designed to hurt them in November's elections — and even Democrats are beginning to chafe. This week, after Republicans filibustered an election-year measure to end tax deductions for corporations' moving expenses overseas, Sen. Mark Begich of Alaska, one of those vulnerable Democrats, said Reid shared the blame for the measure's defeat.

In the House this week, the rush to accomplish even a relatively modest piece of legislation had a dramatic air, with closed-door meetings and members being summoned back from the airport. Speaker John Boehner was swarmed on the House floor Thursday night by angry Republicans who demanded that he keep the House in session for as long as it would take for them to vote on a bill.

President Obama, in a mocking tone during a news conference Friday, said that House Republicans made the border funding bill "a little more extreme" so it

would pass. He then chided the GOP for voting to sue him for an abuse of his executive authority one day, yet demanding that he assert it the next. "They're not even trying to solve the problem," the president said.

## Major issues abandoned

More broadly, Congress has given no indication that other major issues of the day will be confronted this year, even on matters where members of both parties agree urgent action is needed. The immigration system is still in crisis. Companies are renouncing U.S. citizenship over tax breaks. The highway trust fund is running on empty, and entitlement programs are strained.

By traditional measurements, the 113th Congress is now in a race to the bottom for the "do nothing" crown.

As of Wednesday, it had passed just 142 laws — 34 of them ceremonial — compared with the 151 passed to the same date by the last Congress, which had produced fewer laws than any in history.

The original "do-nothing" Congress of 1947 and 1948 passed 906 laws.

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