

# U.S. Rep. Pocan: Joined Washington Journal to discuss the debt ceiling

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**WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Mark Pocan (WI-02)**, a senior member on the House Appropriations Committee, joined CSPAN's Washington Journal with Pedro Echevarria to discuss the urgent need to raise the debt ceiling.

[Click here to watch the full interview, and find excerpts of Rep. Pocan's remarks below.](#)

## **On Ongoing Negotiations - 00:16**

You've got two different sets of negotiations happening at once. The Republicans have said they want to cut spending 22%. They want to go back to FY22 levels of spending and they won't touch non-discretionary spending and they won't touch defense. So that means 22% cuts to everything else. But it's such a ridiculous idea, they can't even put it on paper and put out a budget like the Democrats have, like the President has. In middle of this whole discussion about the lifting the debt ceiling, which we've done 86 times, because that's the right thing to do is to pay your bills... There should be no new negotiations in paying our bills and lifting the debt ceiling. And when it comes to the budget, that's exactly what we do on the Appropriations Committee, but I think the challenge is, they can't even put the ridiculous level of cuts that they proposed on paper, and because of that, they have to have this parallel track to negotiate to kind of bluntly save embarrassment.

When it comes to the debt ceiling, playing chicken with it is a dangerous game for the American people. It means a lot of people will lose their jobs. Interest rates will spike overnight for people who want to buy homes and small businesses who want to buy equipment. It means that stock markets will have a big dip. There's a lot of negative things that happen no one should want to put us in that situation and

there's no way the House Republicans just because of some of their more extreme members should go there.

### **On Work Requirements - 2:33**

This is merely a demand because some people think we should take hostages right now. You don't take hostages over the nation's full faith and credit, and you've got to make sure that we pay our bills. This is more of a problem Kevin McCarthy has with his own members. If he was strong enough, he would stand up to those members and say "no, we're not going to crash the economy because you came to Washington and want a t-shirt that says you did this." But right now, he hasn't done that yet. I think he's hearing from many others, many Senate Republicans, and the only entity that that seems to want to play a game around the debt ceiling right now is the House Republicans. Even the Senate Republicans realize that this is a very dangerous game.

### **On Discharge Petition - 6:23**

This is trying to find five adults in the Republican caucus who will stand up to the stupid rhetoric about the debt ceiling and join every single Democrat to make sure that we're lifting the debt ceiling. We need five Republicans to join the many Senate Republicans who said we have to do this. So that's the process. There's a timeline to it. But it would take us into early June which is about the time that the debt ceiling date has been declared. It's kind of a failsafe. If you can't just get people to do the right thing, because it's the right thing, we've got a vehicle that allows some people to be adults.

Hopefully, there'll be dozens who are willing to break with this kind of crazy wing of the Republican Party that thinks it's a good idea to default on our payments as a country. But I don't know if there's just five it should be way more.

### **On the 14th Amendment - 8:05**

I completely support it. When I got to Congress, my very first session I was on the Budget Committee, and at that time, I said what a stupid only-in-Washington idea was to have a separate vote on the debt ceiling. Congress votes to pass a budget, expend money. It's like if you sign a mortgage is the best way to explain it. You don't get to decide whether or not every month you're going to mail the check, because if you don't mail the check, you lose your home and your credits

destroyed. It's no different than for the federal government. So it's stupid that we have this separate vote that does this because it allows literally handfuls of people, like we're seeing right now hold up the entire federal government. The 14th Amendment is very clear, and I think the president should evoke the parts of the 14th Amendment that would just get us past this. The bottom line is this is more about the Republicans unable to put a budget together with the rhetoric that matches this 22% cut that they've said they're going to do, to veterans, to law enforcement, to health care, and education — go down the list. It's just impossible to put it on paper. What they're doing is they're looking for something to distract people from the fact they can't actually do their job, which is what we're doing right now. Let's find every way possible to make sure we pay our bills, but then let's also get to the product we have to do, which is our annual budget.

### **On Defense Spending Reduction Caucus - 21:07**

We spend a lot of money on defense with almost no checks and balances. The Defense Department has never been able to pass an audit, like almost every other department in the federal government. They should have to. That's a minimum, right? Just make sure that we've got responsible budgeting going on. The last audit, they couldn't find something like 40% of their equipment under the audit. That's a problem. Secondly, we know there's a lot of programs that fail at providing the services promised to taxpayers when we're spending their money. We had put something like \$8 billion into amphibious vehicles that only sank. The most recent class of aircraft carrier, the Ford class has a problem that when the toilets clog, you have to flush \$400,000 worth of acids down the drain, literally flushing money down the drain. No other department can get away with spending like that. We should at least have proper things in place to make sure that we're having some accountability for our tax dollars, and we even know where our equipment is. So that's why a number of us probably and myself formed it but a number of us are very concerned about that spending.