

Last night Republicans in the Committee on Rules blocked a measure that would have increased the federal minimum wage for the first time in nearly a decade. They guaranteed that the measure would not come to the House floor for consideration, debate, and ultimately a vote. In doing so, the Republican leadership once again demonstrated its blatant disregard for the democratic process in pursuit of its agenda.

The need for a minimum wage hike is widely accepted – a New York Times article on June 23 pointed out that a minimum wage worker’s annual income is approximately \$6,000 below the poverty line for a family of three. In short: honest, hardworking Americans are not making enough to support their families. A majority of the population recognizes that this is untenable and unjust; a non-partisan Pew Research Center poll recently found that 83 percent of Americans favored increasing the minimum wage by \$2. This last statistic should shock even the most politically indifferent of citizens – if the House is incapable of passing legislation supported by 83 percent of the population, can it still claim to be a democratic institution?

Members of the House of Representatives are elected to vouch for the interests of their districts. This is accomplished by careful consideration of proposed legislation, followed by debate, and finally a vote; however, this basic underpinning of a representative democracy is alien to the current Republican leadership. Aware that 83% of Americans wanted their representatives to vote in favor of a minimum wage hike, the Republican leadership scrambled to prevent a vote from ever taking place. By using an underhanded tactic in the Rules Committee, they succeeded.

In effect, this action stripped individual members of their ability to represent their constituents. The Republican leadership, by thwarting the authority of duly elected representatives, can hardly claim to be acting in the interests of a majority of Americans. A majority of Americans were in favor of a wage hike, and a majority of their members in Congress were prepared to vote accordingly. Acting in the interests of a select few, Republican leaders abused their position to ensure that this could not happen.

The use of these tactics should provoke outrage in any citizen, Democrat or Republican, concerned about the state of our democracy. In striking down this measure, the Republican leadership dealt a blow to millions of hardworking Americans, and simultaneously denied every citizen their right to be represented in Congress. In doing so, they assaulted the very foundation of our democracy.

No part of our legislative process is too sacred for this Republican leadership to flagrantly violate in pursuit of their agenda; they have consistently demonstrated that their interests contradict the interests of the majority of Americans. The only conclusion is that the Republican leadership in the majority needs to be replaced by representatives truly concerned with the interests of their country.