

One of the most basic functions of Congress is to vote on and approve an annual budget for the operation of the federal government.

Yet that seemingly simple and straightforward task has become increasingly complicated and tumultuous over the years, and even more so in the three years since Democrats took back control of the House from Republicans.

In fact, the minority has lately started to view the appropriations process as an easy opportunity to score cheap political points, to delay the work of the House or to disrupt or discredit our work.

I noted recently that Minority Whip Eric Cantor believes that the rights of Republicans have not been respected by the ongoing appropriations process.

That's ironic coming from that side given that when we used open rules on debate just a few years ago, in 2007, Republicans tried every trick in the book to gum up the appropriations process. And in fact, in years past, when the GOP was in the majority, they generally made sure that our side had very limited opportunities to shape spending bills.

The fact is, we specifically set up this process to both allow the other side an opportunity to speak on each bill while also placing firm limits on time to ensure things move forward.

It was only a few weeks ago that frustrated Republicans tried to crash the entire budget process during the consideration of the Commerce-Justice-State spending bill. Members of the other party repeatedly lined up to change their votes, asked for procedural changes, tried to force the House to adjourn and generally used every trick in the book to waste time and do nothing.

Is that really what Americans want Congress to spend their day doing?

Even with those antics, we allowed 33 amendments to come up for debate – including many from Republicans.

Democrats started out this spring trying to reach an agreement with Republicans about how to improve the process. That didn't work. So in the meantime the Rules Committee has tried to protect the rights of the minority party to have some time for floor debate on each of the 12 appropriations bills by giving them votes at every turn.

So far, Republican Reps. Jeff Flake of Arizona and Jeb Hensarling of Texas have gotten more of their amendments made in order on appropriations bills than anyone else in Congress.

I am proud that under the leadership of Speaker Pelosi, this House is on track to be one of the most productive in history. Outside observers, like Norm Ornstein of AEI, have commented on our accomplishments – everything from regulating tobacco and reforming credit card laws to the climate change bill and the fair pay act and minimum wage increase.

It's clear to us that Republicans are interested primarily in stopping our majority from continuing with that great progress. Until that tactic changes, we are going to keep moving ahead on behalf of the American people – with or without them.