

[By Greg Sargent](#)

Dem Rep. Peter Welch is urging his fellow House Democrats to adopt a novel strategy in the debt ceiling standoff: They should maximize whatever leverage they can exert over the process by saying that under no circumstances will they support a debt ceiling deal that's really bad for Dems.

Welch — who recently led 114 House Dems in voting for a "clean" debt ceiling increase — points out that with many House GOPers likely to vote against a debt ceiling increase, Republican leaders are going to need the support of many Democrats to get the increase through the House. He is in discussions with colleagues about how to draw a hard line against any deal that is deeply unbalanced in the direction of spending cuts.

"They are going to need Democrats — Democratic votes are going to be much more important and consequential," Welch said in an interview. "But if the deal has draconian cuts with no balance and no revenues, it's very unlikely we'll support it."

Welch predicts that as many as half the Democratic caucus might vote No on a bad debt ceiling deal, potentially complicating passage, depending on how many Republicans vote against it.

Welch said that at a certain point, Dems need to stop duplicating the dynamic that was on display during the tax cut compromise, in which Dems ultimately swallowed a deal that in the long run weakened Dem legerage and was bad for the country.

"If we have a Mitch McConnell deal" — all cuts and no revenues — "I'd urge others to oppose it," Welch said. "That would be very bad for the country. At a certain point, if we can't reach a balanced agreement then it will be up to the American people to sort it out out and assign respnsibility."

Welch said that ultimately the debt ceiling would be raised — so Dems should exert their

leverage by turning down a bad deal in the expectation that GOP and Dem leaders would then be forced to negotiate a fairer one.

"We are going to raise the debt ceiling," Welch said. "The question is not whether. It's how."