

[By Mike Lillis](#)

Friday's implosion of budget talks between House Republicans and the White House leaves Congress with little choice but to vote on a clean debt-ceiling hike to stave off default, according to the most dogged supporter of that strategy.

Rep. Peter Welch (D-Vt.) said House Speaker John Boehner's (R-Ohio) decision to end negotiations with President Obama on a sweeping deficit-reduction package to accompany a debt-ceiling hike was "shocking," "dangerous" and risks an economic calamity.

"I want the opportunity to vote straight up" on a clean debt-ceiling bill, Welch said in a phone interview Friday night.

Welch accused Republican leaders of "taking the economy over the cliff to get their way."

"It raises the question of whether their intention is getting a deal or defaulting," Welch said. "We're witnessing political leverage gone wild."

In May, Welch led the effort to pressure GOP leaders to stage a clean debt-limit hike, rallying the support of 114 House Democrats.

A few weeks later, the Republicans obliged. The bill was shot down in a lopsided 318-97 vote considered by Democrats to be a political trap to put members on the record supporting an unpopular policy that Republicans intended to kill anyway.

Welch said the dynamics are much different now.

"That was a show vote, intended to try to increase their leverage," he said. "It was not consequential.

"This time it would matter," he added. "We're now on the brink of default."

Still, the Vermont Democrat conceded that Republicans likely won't bring a clean debt-limit vote to the floor.

Boehner on Friday announced abruptly – and after markets closed – that he's through talking with the White House over a huge deficit-reduction deal because Obama was asking for too much in new tax revenues.

"The White House moved the goal post," Boehner charged at a press conference, saying the sticking point was \$400 billion in new taxes demanded by the White House.

Obama had aired his own frustrations over the impasse just an hour earlier, accusing Republicans of refusing to agree to anything.

"I've been left at the altar now a couple of times," said a stern Obama.

The Speaker said he'll begin huddling down with Senate leaders Friday night in search of a stop-gap measure to prevent a government default before the Aug. 2 deadline.

"No one wants to default on the full faith and credit of the United States of America," Boehner said.

Not ready to give up on a larger deficit-reduction deal, Obama has also invited bipartisan leaders from both chambers to meet at the White House at 11 a.m. Saturday – a meeting

Boehner said he would attend.

"They are going to have to explain to me how it is that we are going to avoid default," Obama said.

Asked what the next step should be, Welch deferred to the Republicans.

"It's up to Mr. Boehner," he said. "He's got a tough job, but it is his job."