



Grand Old Pretzels

"The American People Want a Fair Shot, Not a Rigged Game"

-Rep. Louise Slaughter






In the chaotic twelve months since Republicans assumed control of the House of Representatives, the American people have watched Congress grind to a halt. Much of this dysfunction was caused by a tangled legislative process that was hidden from view. That is why I'm unveiling the "Grand Old Pretzels" scale, to bring Republican tricks out of the shadows and untangle their constant twisting of the House rules.

"Grand Old Pretzels" is a new ranking to provide simple insight into complicated tricks. Through a simple ranking of 1-5, we will rate the level of contortion House Republicans will go through to twist their no-compromise agenda through the House. The more contortions, the more Pretzels they will receive.

For example, a single pretzel, the "Mini Twist," might be awarded for a standard Republican closed rule, of which they issued 37 last session, or declaring that a bid to end National Public Radio is an "emergency" measure.

But 5 pretzels –the coveted "Quintuple Corkscrew" -- will be the reward for full-scale acrobatic contortions, like when the Majority voted to impose a so-called "**martial law**" **rule** on the House for 29 calendar days, the longest blanket martial law rule in the history of the United States Congress.

The Scale of Distortion

The Mini Twist	
The Double Distortion	
The Triple Tangle	
The Quadruple Contortion	
The Quintuple Corkscrew	

Last year, instead of working to create jobs and revitalize the economy, Republicans engaged in a strategy built on opposition to all compromise. Because of this strategy -- a zero-sum game of legislating -- the US government lurched from crisis to crisis in 2011.

Some of this lurching is well known to the American people. Like when Republican legislators walked away from the negotiating table and tied the House in knots as the country headed towards default -- a game of chicken that led to the first downgrade of US credit in history.

Or in December 2011, when they tried to block a compromise payroll tax cut, a move that threatened to raise taxes on millions of middle class Americans. They were finally forced by the American people to accept the bipartisan compromise.

But many of the Republican contortions were less well-known, such as:

- When they voted that their version of a spending bill would **automatically** become law if the Senate failed to consider it.
- Or when they "**deemed**" that the cost of all of their pet projects (the Bush tax cuts; repealing health reform; etc) could be ignored for budget purposes.
- Or when they voted to pretend that a Republican Member had taken the Constitutional oath of office when he wasn't even in the building at the time.

In each of these instances -- in order to pursue their my-way-or-the-highway brand of governing -- Republicans were forced to rig the rules of the House and completely stifle any chance for bipartisan collaboration that would serve the American people.

After a year of fighting against this type of failed leadership, I have decided that the only way to hold the Republicans accountable is to set up a formal system to call out their shenanigans.

Throughout the year, I'll be rating legislative contortions such as these to finally hold them accountable for their uncompromising quest to drive through a divisive agenda no matter the cost.

The American people want a fair shot, not a rigged game. Through Grand Old Pretzels, we will hold Republicans accountable for their failed brand of leadership and their quest to serve their ideology, instead of their country, as Members of the House.