

Payroll

From Page 1

Connell personally informed Boehner and House Majority Leader Eric Cantor of the deal at a private meeting, they said they would check with their rank and file.

But on Saturday, restive House conservatives made clear during a telephone conference call that they were unhappy with the measure.

"I've never seen us so unified," Rep. Louie Gohmert, R-Texas, said as he left a two-hour, closed-door meeting Monday night where Republicans firmed up their plans.

Not surprisingly, the White House weighed in on the side of Obama's Democratic allies.

Spokesman Jay Carney said Boehner was for the two-month stopgap bill "before he was against it" — a claim that the House speaker flatly denied.

Speaking to reporters at the White House, Carney added, "It is not our job to negotiate between him and Senate Republicans."

"We are witnessing the concluding convulsion of confrontation and obstruction in the most unproductive, tea party-dominated partisan session of the Congress in which I have participated," said Rep. Steny Hoyer of Maryland, second-ranking member of the Democratic leadership.

Ironically, until the House rank and file revolted, it appeared that Republicans had outmaneuvered Obama on one point.

The two-month measure that cleared the Senate required him to decide within 60 days to allow construction on a proposed oil pipeline that promises thousands of construction jobs. Obama had threatened to veto legislation that included the requirement, then did an about face.

The president recently announced he was delaying a decision on the pipeline until after the 2012 elections, meaning that while seeking a new term, he would not have to choose between disappointing environmentalists who oppose the project and blue collar unions that support it.

The provision relating to the Keystone XL pipeline first surfaced in the House, where Boehner and the leaders had used

it as an incentive to persuade conservatives to approve an extension of the payroll tax cut that many claimed had failed to create jobs.

The Senate-passed bill, as well as one that cleared the House last week, also would avert a threatened 27 percent cut in payments to doctors who treat Medicare patients.

There was no controversy on that provision, or much of one on anything but the duration of an extension.

"We are witnessing the concluding convulsion of confrontation and obstruction in the most unproductive, tea party-dominated partisan session of the Congress in which I have participated."

REP. STENY HOYER

Democrats gleefully distributed evidence of GOP disagreement, including comments from Sen. Scott Brown of Massachusetts, Richard Lugar of Indiana and others urging the House to approve the two-month measure.

But first-term House Republicans were unmoved.

"What they (the Senate) sent us over was an insult to the American people," said Rep. Ann Marie Buerkle, R-N.Y.

"I don't care about political implications" of letting taxes go up Jan. 1 for 160 million Americans, said Rep. Tom Reed, R-N.Y. "We will stay here as long as it takes in order to do what's right for the American people. That means working on Christmas, New Year's and other days. It's time to get the job done."

Professing a lack of concern about higher taxes was not a widely held position inside the party leadership, though. For both parties, the political implications seemed to matter hugely.

The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee announced it was sending automated phone calls into households in 20 targeted GOP-held districts demanding that lawmakers support the two-month extension, lest taxes go up.

Not to be outdone, the National Republican Congressional Committee issued a statement headlined "Vacation, All House Dems Ever Wanted" and claiming that Democrats wanted to raise taxes on the middle class.

It was unclear how much attention the political maneuvering would draw in a nation where consumers were in the final shopping countdown toward Christmas and the next national election was nearly a year away.

Associated Press writers Alan Fram and Laurie Kellman contributed to this report.

Investigators: 4 Reps Got Discounted Loans

BY LARRY MARGASAK
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Four House lawmakers received VIP discounted loans from the former Countrywide Financial Corp., the lender whose subprime mortgages were largely responsible for the nation's foreclosure crisis, according to congressional investigators.

Rep. Darrell Issa, R-Calif., chairman of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, declined to name the four but has told the House Ethics Committee that it should investigate the lawmakers.

Congressional sources said three of the four are Republicans. The sources spoke on condition of anonymity, because they were not authorized to publicly discuss the investigation.

In 2009, Democratic Rep. Edolphus Towns of New York was identified in the media as having two loans that went through the Countrywide VIP program. On Monday, Towns insisted he was not involved in a VIP program of the

lender and did not receive benefits that weren't available to every customer of the lender.

Issa, in a letter dated Friday and released Monday, said there could be additional lawmakers who received discounted loans.

The most favored customers of Countrywide were known as "Friends of Angelo," who were given discounts in a VIP section under control of the company's CEO Angelo Mozilo. However, Issa said his investigators discovered that other sections of Countrywide also processed VIP loans to public officials and others in position to help the company.

Countrywide was taken over by Bank of America, which has given Issa's committee 100,000 documents in response to subpoenas.

Issa's letter to ethics Chairman Jo Bonner of Alabama and ranking Democrat Linda Sanchez of California said: "Testimony and documents show that Countrywide used the VIP program to build relationships with government officials and others positioned to advance Countrywide's business interests.

"Between January 1996 and June 2008, Countrywide's VIP unit gave discounted loans to employees of the federal government, including the U.S. Congress."

He added, "My staff is also aware of the possibility that loans with VIP benefits were conferred to other members and serviced by a separate loan processing branch."

The ethics committee determines whether House members violated standards of conduct, including a virtual ban on gifts. The committee also can refer cases to the Justice Department for a criminal investigation.

It was previously revealed that Sen. Kent Conrad, D-N.D. and Chris Dodd, D-Conn., while still a senator, had received VIP loans from Countrywide. Both said they did not know they were getting unique deals and Dodd maintained he received no preferential treatment.

Others named as recipients of the VIP program were James Johnson, former head of Fannie Mae who later stepped down as an adviser to Barack Obama's first presidential campaign, and Franklin

Raines, who also headed Fannie Mae. Still other "friends" included retired athletes, a judge, a congressional aide and a newspaper executive.

The Senate's ethics committee looked at the Dodd and Conrad cases and cleared them of wrongdoing, but warned that they should have exercised better judgment.

The committee said the senators should have questioned why they were in the VIP program, because it should have raised red flags.

The Securities and Exchange Commission in October 2010 said that Mozilo would pay a \$22.5 million penalty to settle charges that he and two other former Countrywide executives misled investors as the subprime mortgage crisis began. Mozilo also was banned from ever again serving as an officer or director of a publicly traded company.

He also agreed to pay another \$45 million to settle other violations for a total settlement of \$67.5 million that was to be returned to investors who were harmed.

Season's greetings
May Christmas Deliver The Best Gifts Of All to You and Yours...
Peace, Love, Health, Happiness & Friendship



Merry Christmas & Best Wishes for a Blessed New Year.



Scott Family
Dentistry

1101 Broadway Suite 105, Morgen Square Plaza • 665-2448
www.scott-family-dentistry.com

A Heartwarming Holiday

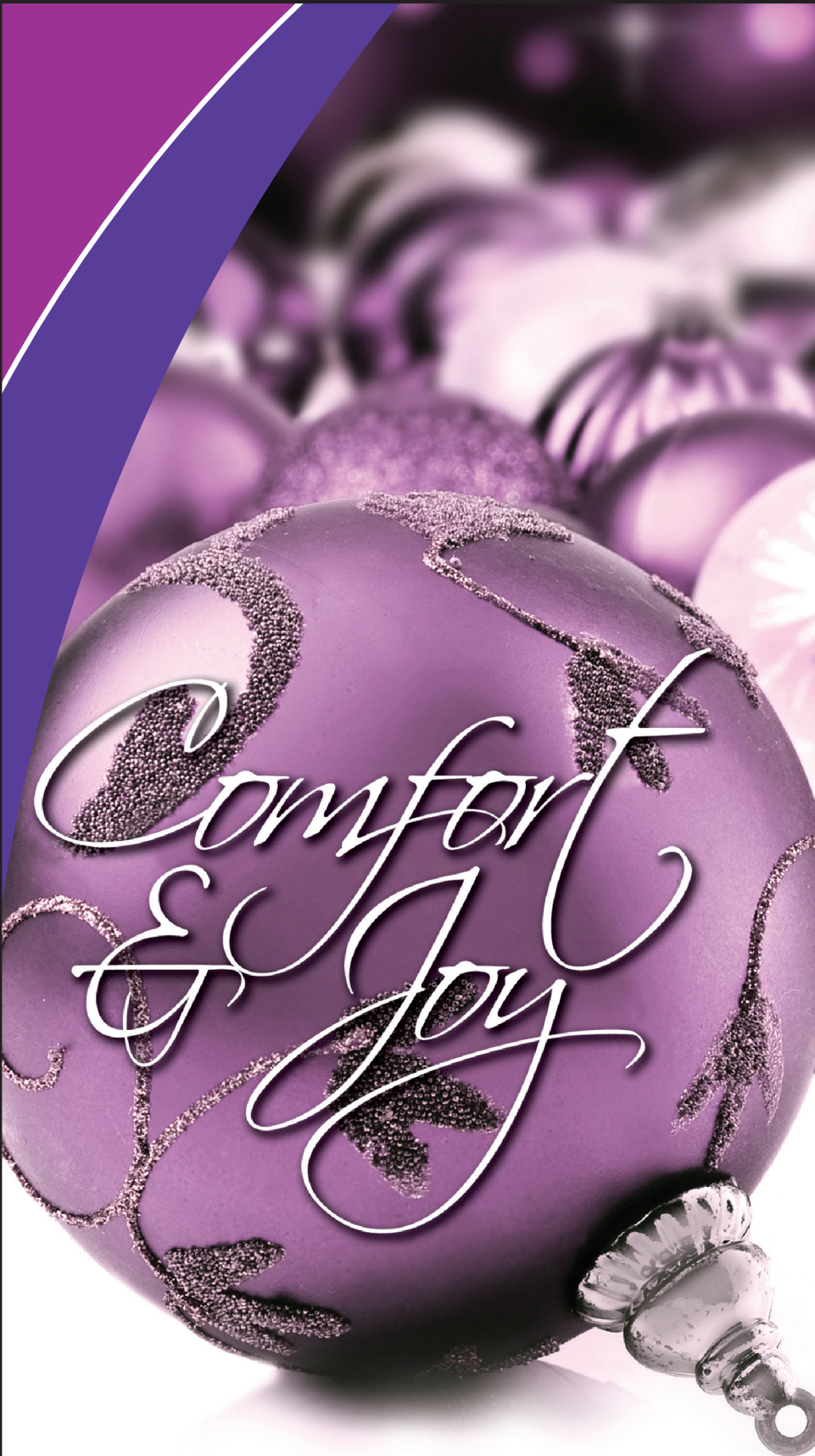


From our home to yours, we wish you and your loved ones the best holiday season ever!
Thank you for your loyal support this year.

FLOOR to CEILING®

INTERIOR DESIGN SHOWROOM

1205 Broadway • Yankton, SD • 665-9728



Merry Christmas and a Healthy Happy New Year.

From all of us at the
YANKTON MEDICAL CLINIC®, P.C.

1104 West 8th Street • Yankton, SD 57078
605-665-7841 • www.yanktonmedicalclinic.com

So Much Care, So Close to Home.

Wishing Our Friends & Customers

Happy Holidays



See Us for All Your Insurance Needs
Serving the Area since 1949

Don't Gamble. Insure with...

M.T. & R.C. Smith Insurance

204 W. 4th St. • Yankton, SD • (605) 665-3611



Wishing you a Beautiful Holiday Season and a New Year of Peace & Happiness

slumberland

furniture that lives the way you do

920 Broadway • Yankton • 605-665-3719