

Payroll

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to agree to the short-term extension passed by the Senate on Saturday. The speaker was initially open to the idea, but rank-and-file Republicans revolted, and the House instead insisted on immediate talks on the year-long measure passed by the House, which contains curbs to unemployment insurance and other ideas backed by conservatives — as well as deeper spending cuts to pay for the full-year cost.

After Senate leaders tried but failed to match the House's goal

Audit

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such as hiring contractors.

The *Press & Dakotan* did not receive a draft copy of the audit Thursday, but sat in on the meeting via telephone.

Among the suggestions outlined by Olson was having the entire board more involved in the approval of task orders.

"That is a lot like what we see in our local government," he said. "Anytime there is a major expenditure or major budgetary change, it requires the board to discuss it and to take a vote on it."

Furthermore, the audit suggests including more detail as to how and when task orders will be carried out to create more accountability. It also recommends that the board of directors establish a competitive solicitation process for major tasks to assure taxpayers the most cost-effective proposal will be accepted.

Other recommendations included having more documentation and oversight of credit card expenditures by district staff, having more complete reports for the board regarding progress on projects and financial data, and more involvement in the hiring of subcontractors.

The board noted that it had already made changes in some areas that would address the audit's recommendations.

JRWDD manager Darrell Raschke told the *Press & Dakotan* that he is glad the nearly yearlong audit process is complete. The organization paid more than \$14,000 for it, he stated.

"There were no findings of any wrongdoing, and there were some suggestions on how to maybe do a few things better," Raschke said. "I'm glad to have this behind us. I've been telling everybody all along that there is nothing there (as far as wrongdoing)."

At the conclusion of Thursday's meeting, the board voted to accept the audit and adopt some of its recommendations by July 1. A final version of the document will be issued in the coming weeks.

Railroad

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Avon, Tabor and Dante.

Don Juffer, Wagner Native Ethanol's chairman, said the company is still working on its financial package for the plant and rail line. The delays have been caused by changes made to improve the plant's profitability by using new technology to get more energy out of the corn kernel, he said.

"We've waited for the technology to be developed," Juffer said Thursday. "That's why it took a couple more years, because we knew this was coming and we knew a regular ethanol plant would be tougher to sell for the investors."

Juffer said the company still plans to pursue buying the railroad from the state.

Yeaton said the board will look at every opportunity to restore service in the best possible way, whether through a company purchasing the line or leasing it from the state.

South Dakota bought the 82-mile stretch after the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad, known as the Milwaukee Road, declared bankruptcy in the late 1970s.

Estimates to restore the portion are reaching \$30 million, Yeaton said.

"We just don't have the money to fix it ourselves," he said.

In 2010, the U.S. Department of Transportation committed to provide \$16 million toward the rebuilding of a state-owned rail line between Mitchell and Chamberlain. The funding is allowing heavier rail and new ties and ballast to be installed along the MRC line, which had been in disrepair and saw little use.

Yeaton said the project is boosting agricultural businesses along the line, and restoration of the Platte to Napa Junction line could lead to new grain elevators popping up in that area.

for a full-year pact, the chamber on Saturday instead gave sweeping approval for the two-month extension of the payroll tax cut, jobless benefits and doctors' Medicare fees that otherwise would have been cut 27 percent. The House had just days before passed a full-year extension that included a series of conservative policy prescriptions unpalatable to Obama and congressional Democrats.

Obama, Republicans and congressional Democrats all said they preferred a one-year extension but the politics of achieving that eluded them. All pledged to start working on that in January.

"Has this place become so dysfunctional that even when we agree to things we can't do it?"

Obama asked. "Enough is enough."

The top Senate Republican, Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, was a driving force behind Thursday's agreement, imploring Boehner to accept the deal that McConnell and Senate Democratic Leader Harry Reid had struck last week and passed with overwhelming support in both parties.

"There remain important differences between the parties on how to implement these policies, and it is critical that we protect middle-class families from a tax increase while we work them out," Reid said after Boehner's announcement.

The breakthrough emerged as a firewall erected by tea party-backed House Republicans

crumbled Thursday.

"I don't think that my constituents should have a tax increase because of Washington's dysfunction," said freshman Rep. Sean Duffy, R-Wis.

The Republican establishment, too, put new pressure on House Republicans to compromise.

The 2008 GOP presidential nominee, John McCain, former Bush administration confidant Karl Rove and The Wall Street Journal editorial page were among conservative voices urging House Republicans to retreat.

Just hours before he announced the breakthrough, Boehner had made the case for a year-long extension. But on a brief late afternoon conference call, he informed his colleagues it was

time to yield.

"He said that as your leader, you've in effect asked me to make decisions easy and difficult and I'm making my decision right now," said Rep. Jack Kingston, R-Ga., paraphrasing Boehner's comments.

Kingston said the conference call lasted just minutes and Boehner did not give anyone time to respond.

There was still carping among tea party freshmen upset that GOP leaders had yielded.

"Even though there is plenty of evidence this is a bad deal for America ... the House has caved yet again to the president and Senate Democrats," said Rep. Tim Huelskamp, R-Kan. "We were sent here with a clear set of instruc-

tions from the American people to put an end to business as usual in Washington, yet here we are being asked to sign off on yet another gimmick."

Almost forgotten in the firestorm is that McConnell and Boehner had extracted a major victory last week, winning a provision that would require Obama to make a swift decision on whether to approve construction of the Keystone XL oil pipeline, which would bring Canadian oil to the U.S. and create thousands of construction jobs. To block the pipeline, Obama would have to declare that is not in the nation's interest.

Obama wanted to put the decision off until after the 2012 election.

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