

[Pence Backs Boehner](#)

July 28, 2011 11:27 A.M.

By Robert Costa

As House Republicans streamed out of this morning's conference meeting, ducking water pipes in the dingy Capitol basement, Rep. Mike Pence (R., Ind.) stood near the elevators. One by one, conservatives came up to him and shook his hand, thanking him for rallying colleagues behind the Boehner plan. Pence's speech at the closed-door confab, many told him, was a big reason they felt comfortable voting aye. Pence, who is running for governor and eschewed a presidential run earlier this year, swatted off the praise, but it was clear that his remarks, beyond Rep. Mike Kelly's "Knutie Rockne" pep talk, was instrumental in moving wary Republicans toward the speaker.

Pence tells National Review Online that he wrote his speech last night, on pen and pad, using a pink highlighter to underscore his key points. He has been telling Republicans this week to keep an "open mind" on the Boehner plan, but he wanted to use this morning as an opportunity to talk about why the proposal fit with the conservative agenda, even if it was far from perfect.

"For ten years, I have been fighting runaway spending, deficits, debt and bailouts by both political parties," Pence told Republicans. "I have come to the conclusion that Washington, D.C., is not only broke, it's broken. As Congressman Jim Jordan said earlier this week, the American people don't just want a deal, they want a solution. I believe that a balanced-budget amendment to the Constitution of the United States is that solution. But as I told you all on Tuesday, I did not want to vote for any increase in the debt ceiling unless Congress did everything in its power to send a balanced-budget amendment to the Senate and the states. With the speaker's decision to bring both balanced-budget amendments to the floor — one with spending limits and tax-increase limits, and one that nearly passed out of the Congress in 1995 — I believe we are doing just that. And as such, I will support the Boehner plan and urge all of my colleagues to consider doing the same.

"The Boehner plan includes no tax increases and dollar-for-dollar cuts in spending," Pence continued. "But it also includes, and this is a very important point, the requirement that the Senate take a vote on the balanced-budget amendment for the first time in 15 years. There is a soft link between the Boehner plan and the balanced-budget amendment because a vote is required. I am for a spending-limit amendment and the balanced-budget amendment — I wrote one. But by also offering a bipartisan version, by playing it straight, we have a shot at passing the balanced-budget amendment by the requisite 290 votes. What could be more compelling than sending a balanced-budget amendment with 290 votes to the United States Senate?"

"Today we can make progress toward fiscal discipline," Pence concluded. "Tomorrow we can make history by sending a balanced-budget amendment to the Senate and to the states for ratification. And so we must, so help us God."