

More deficit finger pointing begins (Politico)

By Seung Min Kim

The deficit-cutting supercommittee has yet to announce its imminent failure, but rank-and-file lawmakers are already starting to pile on.

Congressional Republicans are pointing fingers squarely at President Barack Obama, blaming him for his hands-off approach to the supercommittee negotiations, which are expected to fold later Monday.

Rep. Allen West (R-Fla.) said in a statement that the looming failure of the supercommittee is an “embarrassment” to Congress – an institution that is already suffering single-digit approval ratings in recent public opinion polls. But the freshman lawmaker also took aim at the Obama administration.

“I find it appalling that grown adults cannot sit down at a table and find a way to negotiate something so important to the future of this nation,” West said, adding that Obama “stood by and [did] nothing to encourage bipartisanship among this committee.”

Added Rep. Vicky Hartzler (R-Mo.) on Twitter: “Looks increasingly likely the Super Committee will fail in its charge to find \$1.2 trillion in savings/reforms. Where’s Pres. Obama? AWOL!”

The supercommittee, created under the August legislation to raise the debt ceiling, was tasked with finding at least \$1.2 trillion in deficit-cutting measures by Nov. 23. If it didn’t produce a deal, a round of spending cuts in defense and domestic programs — meant to be anathema to both parties and add pressure to the supercommittee to reach an agreement — would go into effect in January 2013.

But after three months of closed-door negotiations, phone calls and just a small handful of public hearings, no supercommittee agreement is in sight — despite a flurry of last-minute proposals exchanged between sides in the waning weeks.

Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.) said on MSNBC Monday morning that deferring to the automatic cuts was “not governing.”

A freshman senator and former governor, Manchin said he plans to send a letter to Obama and congressional leaders, urging them to set a vote on the plan put forth by the president’s fiscal commission, chaired by Erskine Bowles and former Sen. Alan Simpson (R-Wyo.) That plan cuts the federal deficit by roughly \$4 trillion over a decade.

Other lawmakers were also quick to suggest alternatives.

Freshman Sen. Mark Kirk (R-Ill.) suggested via Twitter that the Senate Gang of Six — a group of bipartisan senators who met for a year to produce a \$3.7 trillion deficit-cutting plan — should take over where the supercommittee left off.

The Gang of Six’s proposal includes cuts to entitlement programs and discretionary spending, as well as up to \$1 trillion in new revenues through tax reform. But its plan was never introduced as legislation, and Senate leaders have largely dismissed its proposals.

For the entire story, click [here](#) .

