

[THE HILL: House Dems hammer GOP on jobs](#)

New year. Same message.

In their first public address of 2012, House Democratic leaders Thursday ripped into Republicans for ignoring President Obama's jobs package amid a lingering unemployment crisis...

The Democrats on Thursday also focused on the looming, end-of-February deadline for Congress to extend the popular payroll-tax holiday, continue emergency benefits for the long-term unemployed and prevent Medicare doctors from being hit with a steep pay cut. They noted that Congress has flirted dangerously with similar deadlines over the last year, and suggested that the members of the bipartisan conference committee — named last month to iron out a deal on the three provisions — get to work right away....

Rep. Xavier Becerra (D-Calif.), another member of the conference panel, warned that any lawmakers hoping to expand the committee's scope beyond the payroll tax, unemployment insurance and Medicare would risk losing all three.

"Those are the three tasks before us," Becerra said. "And anyone wishing to meddle beyond that is risking the clock expiring by Feb. 29."

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