

[By Humberto Sanchez](#)

Rep. Peter Welch (D-Vt.) and four other House Democrats are leading the charge against Republican efforts to repeal automatic spending cuts for the Pentagon that are scheduled to take place beginning in 2013.

"A deal is a deal," Welch said at a press conference today. "Failure has consequences."

The \$1.2 trillion in cuts, including a \$600 billion reduction in defense spending, which would take place over 10 years, was triggered by the failure of the Joint Committee on Deficit Reduction. The super committee was established as part of the deal struck in August to increase the debt ceiling.

The panel was charged with devising and approving a plan to cut at least \$1.2 trillion by the end of last month so that Congress could vote on the package.

But when the 12-member committee failed to approve a plan, the sequestration process was triggered. It will result in automatic, across-the-board cuts divided evenly between security and non-security spending.

Welch's comments come as House Armed Services Chairman Buck McKeon (R-Calif.) unveiled legislation that would find alternative savings by trimming the size of the federal workforce by 10 percent to cover one year of the sequester.

McKeon, at a separate press conference today, said his bill has 25 to 30 co-sponsors. He argued that the Pentagon is already instituting \$489 billion in cuts over 10 years, including the \$450 billion required under the deal to raise the debt ceiling.

"I don't think people understand that" half of the cuts in the debt ceiling deal came from defense spending, he noted. McKeon added that national security would be threatened if the sequester is not adjusted.

Asked if he regretted his vote in favor of the debt ceiling deal, Rep. Allen West (R-Fla.) said, "I have no regrets. As a matter of fact, I said it was a 70 to 75 percent solution. One of the things I was not very confident about was this super committee thing. I did not believe in having this nuclear option over our heads. But now, as an adult ... it is time for us to start looking for a common sense solution."

McKeon, who also voted for the debt deal agreed with West, who is a co-sponsor of the bill.

"I couldn't have said it better," he said.

McKeon said he's been working with Senate Minority Whip Jon Kyl (R-Ariz.) and three other Senate Republicans concerned about the Pentagon's ability to shoulder the cuts. Those Senators announced Wednesday that they intend to introduce legislation next month that would identify alternative spending cuts.

The Democrats opposed to adjusting the sequester, including Reps. George Miller (Calif.), Chris Van Hollen (Md.) and Emanuel Cleaver (Mo.), sent a letter to President Barack Obama today in support of his warning that he would veto efforts to reduce the sequester that reached his desk. More than 90 Democrats have signed the letter, including House Minority Whip Steny Hoyer (Md.).

"We stand with President Obama, who said that he would veto legislation to overturn the automatic cuts unless there was a balanced agreement to reach the \$1.2 trillion in [deficit] reduction figure," said Miller, one of the top lieutenants of House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (Calif.).

All agreed that the only way the sequester could be adjusted would be if Congress agrees on a new deficit reduction plan, which includes new revenues — the major sticking point that lead to

the impasse in the super committee.

The super committee "failed because Republicans opposed a balanced solution that included significant new taxes on the most wealthy people and the largest corporations in America," Miller said, adding that GOP Members who voted for the plan should honor their votes.

"If Republicans in Congress didn't think that the Pentagon could withstand more spending cuts, then they should have put more pressure on their own party to agree to a balanced package of new revenues and new spending cuts to reduce the debt," Miller added.

"We oppose an end run of the debt ceiling deal to protect the Pentagon" Welch said. "We support ongoing negotiations to achieve savings equal to or greater than the sequester. But any agreement must be balanced, including defense and revenues."