Under the package, 2 percentage Social Security payroll tax cut will continue for 160 million workers, which assures a worker making $50,000 a year a tax relief of about $80 a month.

By IKE MGBATOGU

Contributing Writer

COLUMBUS – When President Barack Obama signed the payroll tax cut extension last year, it ended a bruising political brawl between the House Republican leadership and the White House and hailed as a bipartisan triumph for the American people.

House Republicans led by Speaker John Boehner initially rejected the agreement, grumbling that it did not cover the entire 2012. He was eventually forced to accept it.

Boehner emerged out of that battle politically bloodied after he was blamed for standing in the way of tax cuts for American workers. But, though that fight scarred Boehner, it left both sides mindful of the paralyzing gridlock it had spurred to the profound displeasure of Americans at a time of economic pain.

That deal extended payroll tax cut for only two months. Beside the Republicans fuming about the deal being only for a short term, they also grumbled over how to pay for it. They later agreed to sign on to the agreement, but it clearly came with the unavoidable expectation requiring both sides to revisit the issue. And since then, it had simmered as a brewing political tinderbox in a presidential Election Year.

But last week, the showdown was avoided after Congressional Democrats and their Republican counterparts, in a rare display of bipartisanship, uncharacteristically set their differences aside and worked out a deal to extend the payroll tax cut for the entire 2012.

The $143 billion deal, which was first announced last week by Democratic Senator Max Baucus and Republican Congressman Dave Camp, was passed last week by the House on a 293 – 132 vote, and soon after approved by the Senate by a 60 – 36 vote.

It has been sent to Obama for signature.

While visiting a Boeing factory in Everett, Wash., Friday, Obama praised Congress for getting the job done.

“It is amazing what happens when Congress focuses on doing the right thing instead of just playing politics,” Obama said. “This was a good example and Congress should take pride in it.”

The agreement is generally viewed as a political triumph for Obama who had fiercely pushed for the package against a stubborn tide of resistance from Republican lawmakers.

That resistance persisted but because they were severely weakened by their open capitulation on the issue last year, Republicans reluctantly agreed to the deal as a face saving retreat from a partisan tiff that has clearly evolved as a 'no-win' situation for them.

President Obama has always maintained that "This is the right thing to do to strengthen our families, grow our economy and create new jobs." The Republicans, on the other hand, have always argued that it won't improve the economy, maintaining they would support the package only if the tax cut is paid for with spending cuts.

In the end, both sides agreed to craft and finalize the deal after Republicans dropped their demand of implementing spending cuts to pay for the extended relief. However, they scored a victory in the deal for having successfully negotiated a reduction in the number of weeks workers in some states would draw jobless benefits, slashing it from 99 weeks to 73 weeks.

Under the package, 2 percentage Social Security payroll tax cut will continue for 160 million workers, which assures a worker making $50,000 a year a tax relief of about $80 a month.

The agreement also allows the flow of unemployment benefits to continue for about 2 million jobless folks at an average pay of $300 per week. That sums up to $30 billion cost for the government, to be paid for in part by revenue from the sale of broadcast airwaves and mandating new federal workers to chip in 2.3 percent more from their pay for their pensions.

. *He can be reached by email at Onumbamedia@yahoo.com*