



Probably there is consensus among the community that 2011 was one of the more difficult years financially. For some it may have been the most difficult year ever experienced. Too many people are ending the year without holding the jobs or having the incomes they had when it started. Some of the unemployed who hoped the year would provide jobs, didn't have that hope materialize, and are still hoping as a new year approaches.

It was disappointing that during the year the business [private sector](#) , regarded as the engine that generates job growth, did not really fulfill that role despite signs of a marginal increase in private sector jobs as the year waned. So, without the required private sector support, the federal government had to increase its role as a primary creator of jobs, although not the primary employer. The government's role has been extremely difficult, with continued high unemployment, only slipping below nine percent to 8.6 percent in November. This decline is attributed to seasonal holiday employment, and unemployment could possibly increase again to nine percent, and more, in January, when seasonal workers are terminated.

Compounding the federal government's problems is that 2011 revealed one of the more [contentious, frustrating periods in the U.S. Congress](#) , and between Congress and President Barack Obama. With the 2010 election of an overwhelming Republican majority in the U.S. House of Representatives, conflicts over legislation supported by Obama and Democrat leaders were not surprising, but the manner in which these conflicts persisted, for example in initiatives like Obama's [Jobs Act](#)

, without heeding the needs of the majority of Americans, continues to be mind boggling. As the year drew to a close, were it not for the time constraints placed on Congressional members to be home with their families for the Christmas break, the two-month compromise made to extend payroll tax cuts and unemployment benefits would quite possibly not have been secured.

However, the persistent economic problems, the lukewarm input from the American private sector, the ridiculous persistent impasse in Congress, and the resistance of Congress to Obama's initiatives, created an awakening among the American people.

The emergence of the [Occupy Wall Street](#) (OWS) – a protest originating with hundreds of people fed up with the manipulations of financial institutions on Wall Street while raging unemployment and economic hardships persist among the majority of Americans, quickly spread across the country. As the protest spread it covered several financial ills experienced by the 99 percent of Americans earning well below \$250,000 annually, and targeted the prosperous one percent earning above this threshold. Aspects of the protests also targeted the inability of the U.S. Congress to assist the "99 percent."

Although the OWS movement has experienced setbacks with public officials nationally removing protesters from the parks and other public sites they occupied, the movement revealed a mood in America not seen since the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, and the anti-Viet Nam War movement in the 1970s. If the OWS can find the appropriate leadership and organization that it ought to have it could have a similar impact the two earlier protests movement had, and, in this case, see the "one percent" and Congress become more in-tuned with the needs of the "99 percent."

In South Florida another significant example of the power of the people was displayed when voters soundly recalled former Miami-Dade County Mayor Carlos Alvarez, who ignored homeowners' pleas and r [aised property taxes](#) by some 14 percent. Needless to say, Alvarez, who was instrumental in elevating the role of county mayor to the position of strong-mayor and accused by county residents as being arrogant, never assumed he could have been recalled.

Were it not that Florida law does not permit state governors to be recalled it is almost certain that Governor Rick Scott, who has one of the worst ratings among all the nation's governors, would also have been the target of a recall election because of the unpopularity of some of the legislations he has initiated since taking office in January.

One of the most unpopular legislation passed by the Republican led Florida administration, under the leadership of Scott, has been [the new election law that critics believe suppress voter rights](#), primarily Black and other minority voters, and also frustrate voter registration. Although this law is subject to review by higher courts next year, it is doubtful if it will be repealed or modified. But the people can still counteract the law if registered voters record the largest voter turnout in this state in the November 2012 general elections.

Come next February, Americans will again face potential frustration as another deadlock likely emerge in Congress, and between Congress and the White House, over the long-term extension of the payroll tax cuts and unemployment benefits. But, 2011 showed Americans that they can successfully exercise their power, secure their rights and ensure such potential Congressional deadlocks no longer succeeds.