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Feinstein faults GOP, Obama for stalemate

The Fresno Bee (John Ellis)

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U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein says her Senate Republican colleagues have for two years used arcane parliamentary procedures to stymie President Barack Obama's agenda from moving forward.

But California's senior senator also said Obama can do more to move his plans forward as well.

"He could be more active in terms of picking up the phone and calling people," Feinstein told The Bee's editorial board Tuesday.

Senators, she says, are flattered when the president makes a personal call to seek support for a piece of legislation, and it is also hard to say no to the nation's top officeholder. It was something, she says, that former Democratic President Bill Clinton did with great success.

"I'm not sure (Obama) understands that," Feinstein said.

Feinstein was in Fresno on Tuesday for a Maddy Institute luncheon speech, which was preceded by a meeting with The Bee's editorial board. The 79-year-old former San Francisco mayor is also in a re-election campaign, seeking her fourth full Senate term.

On Tuesday, she covered a wide range of issues during her Fresno visit, but the core of her remarks both to The Bee and at the Maddy Institute luncheon were about finding compromise to move the nation forward.

Part of the problem, she said, are Republicans and members of the Tea Party who set out to stop

Obama at all costs. Senate Republicans, she said, block debate in a body set up to be deliberative and, eventually, to put legislation forward for an up or down vote.

What is unclear is how the nation will move forward if Obama wins a second term, or if his Republican challenger, Mitt Romney, wins. After what has happened to Obama, she said, the Senate under a Romney administration could return the favor -- Democrats putting up roadblocks to the former Massachusetts governor's agenda.

Feinstein added that she does not favor this course of action.

It's something that could happen whether the Democrats retain control of the Senate, or if Republicans are able to capture control.

Just who will control the body after next Tuesday's election is anybody's guess, Feinstein told The Bee's editorial board

"I think everything is within the margin of error," she said.



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