

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 26, 2013

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Chairman
Committee on the Budget
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairman
Senate Budget Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
Ranking Member
Committee on the Budget
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jeff Sessions
Ranking Member
Senate Budget Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairmen Ryan and Murray, and Ranking Members Van Hollen and Sessions:

Although we applaud the bipartisan effort that ended the 16-day government shutdown and delayed breaching the debt limit, Congress's work is not finished. We write to request that you focus your conference committee's work on avoiding both another shutdown and a financial crisis due to a failure to honor our nation's financial obligations, and on ending the sequester cuts that are harming vital investments like education, research and development, and infrastructure.

We all hold out hope that a long-term solution to our nation's fiscal and economic challenges may be achievable, but in the meantime there are immediate steps that we can take to restore consumer confidence in Congress and the economy. First, we should end the sequester, which is costing jobs and hampering economic growth. The sequester is delaying the actions of the FDA, the National Institutes of Health, and the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, and other agencies crucial to fostering innovation. It has imposed arbitrary cuts on programs like the Indian Health Service, adding to the list of broken promises that face American Indians. Cuts to childhood development and education not only cause harm now, but a failure to invest in future generations will have ramifications for years to come.

Second, we cannot support proposals to cut Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid benefits, cuts that would be extremely damaging to seniors, people with disabilities, families, and children. We can strengthen the Social Security Trust Fund by lifting the earnings cap but that should be a discussion that is separate and apart from the immediate budget debate. We can reduce Medicare spending and improve quality without raising out-of-pocket costs and placing more financial burdens on lower-income and middle-income Americans. In fact, one way to do that is to eliminate the sequester that is hampering efforts to reduce fraud and abuse.

The most urgent crisis facing our nation is a crisis of consumer confidence and a sluggish economy. Focusing on ending the sequester and on avoiding another shutdown would allow us to address those immediate challenges and create the good jobs we need.

Let us come together to get both our government and our economy back on track so that we can reduce income inequality, promote a vibrant middle-class, and provide every American with the opportunity to succeed. We look forward to working with all of you, regardless of party, for the good of the country.

Sincerely,

Jack Olson

Jan Schakowsky

Keith Ellison

Carol Miller

Michael H. Michalek

Mark Takano

Frank Rosten

Rand M. Hyde

Bob L. Rush

Ken A. Waxman

Luella Foybal-Allard

Judy Chu

Chell R

Sam Linn

John Long

Mary Waters

Shirley Jackson

Ella Swallow

Tom Khan

Joe Lopez

Rinda J. Sarny

John Sumner

Janice Hahn

Mr. Fox

Julia C. C.
