

An Open Letter to Members of the Indiana Congressional Delegation concerning the debt ceiling crisis.

As members of Congress, I believe that each of you, when the whole of your collective service is fairly examined, have made important contributions to Indiana and the nation. However, the acid debate that is now going on in Washington does not set well with any of my family members, friends, neighbors and colleagues. It demeans your collective and individuals achievements and intellect. It demeans your ability to lead when we need leadership.

Regarding the issues that threaten the nation let me say the following.

The debt ceiling issue should clearly be dealt with separately and promptly. That is a legal and technical act that is required to allow our system of governance and finance to function. Raising the debt ceiling has become routine in recent decades and it has not been a function of who served in the White House and who controlled Congress. So please take the politics out of this simple but important act that has become necessary given the economic realities faced by the United States. Please raise the debt ceiling. Do not put Americans at risk.

What should not be routine are the actions of Congress and the executive branch of government that have forced the national government to raise the debt ceiling time after time. For the good of the nation, the U.S. Congress and the national administration need to address the intertwined issues of the national budget, vital public programs, responsible spending, and the means for paying our bills including appropriate tax increases.

To do that the Congress and the White House need to address the issue of how do we, as a nation and society, engage in activities that will produce items of value: the products, profits and wages that are needed so our nation can pay its bills and its citizens can prosper.

The discussion should include fair trade, new technologies, viable wages and working conditions, the benefits and means for achieving a greener and competitive economy, and capitalization. The discussion should include the investments in people that are needed to enable the country to produce businesses and jobs that will truly generate wealth. The discussion should include sustainable environmental and economic investment strategies and financial reforms.

The discussion must include humane, fair and effective health and medical services for all Americans based on their actual needs, and not based on special interest profits. The vital economic and life sustaining role played by Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid for senior citizens, persons with disabilities, and families must also be a priority in any talks.

The discussion should include freeing Congress and any national administration from the excessive intrusions of special interests (foreign and domestic) in critical public policy decisions. The discussion should include foreign policy and the means to work with other governments and the United Nations to reduce the excessive influence and waste of military investments. The latter takes our collective attention away from the global challenges of population, food and the environment that may doom the human community if left unresolved.

The discussion should include an appeal by Congressional and executive branch leaders to do these pressing things absent a wasteful indulgence regarding who has been at fault and who is presently at fault. To the extent possible, the Congress and the White House should strive to establish a national

dialogue, a real discussion among Americans that features far, far more listening and learning, and far, far less shouting.

The dialogue process suggested in this letter is complicated, and would take time to implement, but it also offers hope. Conversely, if no action is taken to address these and other crucial issues, there will come a point in which we no longer have the time to do so. If such a dialogue process is clearly and honestly explained to the American people I believe they would embrace it with enthusiasm. Americans want America to work and work well. We all want a country that is fair and competent. Most people want to work together. If our political leaders challenge them to act on positive solutions it is reasonable to assume the bulk of the nation will do exactly that.

This is the leadership I am looking for from each of you in the Indiana Congressional delegation. Like other Hoosiers, I do not need sound bites, TV ads, and uninvited emails to tell me who is not a good leader. Like my neighbors, I want leaders who respect our democracy and its all of its citizens. That means leaders who are willing to listen, and to act with courage, to address the needs of all of the people in our state and nation.

Sincerely yours,

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