DAVID LOEBSACK
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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
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September 19, 2011

The Honorable Jeb Hensarling
Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Deficit Reduction
129 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray
Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Deficit Reduction
448 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Co-Chair Hensarling and Co-Chair Murray,

I write to continue to bring to your attention bipartisan legislation I recently introduced to inspire confidence in the Joint Committee on Deficit Reduction from the American people by requiring a high level of transparency for committee members and staff. Entitled the Deficit Committee Transparency Act, HR 2860, it is comprised of proposals to ensure the public has insight into how the committee will reach its important conclusions on at least $1.2 trillion in deficit reduction by November 23, 2011.

There is near certainty the committee will be subject to intense pressure and you have no doubt seen a number of stories referencing the expected offensive strategies to try and influence the outcome of your deliberations. I believe that for the American people to have confidence in the committee's proceedings, outcome, and even a renewed confidence in Congress, you must ensure transparency when dealing with these important matters. The committee's members need to be free from undue influence and free to make decisions that are best for the country and not special interests.

Specifically, this legislation will require disclosure of meetings with special interests between committee members and staff on a committee website. It also requires disclosure of all campaign contributions from special interests as well as disclosure of any donation over $500. To ensure the public can fully understand the committee's important proceedings, the legislation also requires creation of a committee website, that hearings be televised and streamed online, and that the proposed legislative language be published 72 hours before a vote occurs. It also requires disclosure of meetings before they occur within the 48 hours leading up to the vote so the public knows who is attempting to influence the committee's process even at the very end of deliberations.

I applaud the proposals adopted during the committee's first meeting on September 8 and believe they are a positive step toward ensuring confidence in the committee's proceedings. Unfortunately, many of them fall short of the expectations of transparency I believe the American people are looking for from the committee. Furthermore, they fall short of the transparency I believe is necessary to ensure a final product that is free from the question of undue influence and special interest intervention. I hear frequently from my constituents that they are tired of politicians making deals that benefit special interests over the good of the country.

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Given the importance of your task and the need for the outcome of the committee to be supported in a bipartisan fashion that requires shared sacrifice and bipartisan compromise, Members of Congress and voters must have a high level of confidence in the committee's product and the process. I therefore urge you to proactively implement the transparency measures laid out in this legislation as part of the rules governing your committee in the immediate future. If this bill is brought to a vote in the House or Senate prior to any changes in your rules, I would urge you to support its passage and implementation.

With the short timeframe you have to develop a bipartisan proposal to reduce the deficit by at least $1.2 trillion, it is more important than ever that a high level of transparency be required of the committee's and staff's meetings, campaign contributions, and interactions. The American people deserve no less.

I again respectfully urge you to proactively implement these measures for the committee or to support passage of this legislation by the House and Senate as soon as possible. Thank you for your time and consideration of these important matters.

Sincerely,

Dave Loebsack
Member of Congress