



May 8, 2023

Dear President Biden,

The Vice President of the United States was correct, when he said in 2010, that “it’s in everyone’s interest politically to cooperate” on raising the debt limit. In 2011, he criticized those “taking an absolutist position: my way or no way. That’s not governing. That’s no way to govern.”

Mr. President, you made those statements. We agree with them.

We now ask you – we urge you – to work in good faith with congressional members of both parties to raise the debt limit while improving the federal government’s budget outlook. Simply showing up isn’t enough. The American people expect the stewards of the public trust in Congress and the White House to seek and to find common ground that continually improves the value they get from their government.

Your absolutist position, so far, for a debt limit increase without reforms is far from the mainstream. [Gallup polling](#) shows that 78% of Americans worry a great deal or a fair amount “about federal spending and the budget deficit.” The debt limit must be raised, and it should be done responsibly – that means enacting immediate savings and establishing budget guardrails. Congress has done this many times before, and you have often supported such actions.

We are encouraged that the House of Representatives has made a serious, substantive offer. The Limit, Save, and Grow Act would not only reduce wasteful and unnecessary spending, but it would also unleash energy abundance and reclaim Congress’ legislative powers for major, agency-proposed regulations. The lowest-hanging fruit is surely ending spending for an emergency that you and both houses of Congress agree is over.

Explosive growth in debt-financed spending during the pandemic produced the highest inflation in a generation, rapid interest rate increases, turmoil in the financial sector, and a profound level of anxiety about the federal government’s financial stability. Failing to get our house in order, starting with this year’s debt limit deal, invites economic calamity and a shrunken America on the world stage. We must begin to break the addiction to excessive spending and debt.

The debt burden has grown by leaps and bounds under all political configurations. Immediate spending restraint is a crucial first step, but only better budgeting practices can heal the federal government’s systemic dysfunction. As Urban Institute scholar C. Eugene Steuerle wrote in *Dead Men Ruling*, “To enact a positive agenda for the future, we must also reform the rules, processes, and institutions so that they can better support the forward-looking goals that we seek.”

If the federal government enacts savings and starts to fix the system, you could help break the cycle and stop ending up back in this situation. We urge you to come to the table. Surely consensus is possible to resolve immediate needs while making progress on our country’s long-term challenges. The clock is ticking. Americans need you and your congressional counterparts to come together.

Sincerely,

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