

August 9, 2011

The Honorable House Speaker John Boehner
H - 232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Boehner,

The American people are upset with the political dysfunction in Congress, and rightly so, following the months of infighting over the debt ceiling. They desperately want political leaders who can rise above partisan politics and special interests to work on their behalf to solve the serious issues we are facing. The American people desperately need to have our trust in our elected representatives restored.

One of the ways we can begin restoring that trust is to have the bi-partisan Debt Reduction Super Committee work in an open and transparent manner. Closed meetings and records will only perpetuate popular perceptions that our national government represents special interests, not the interests of the country.

The Debt Reduction Super Committee is supposed to work on a bi-partisan plan to address a fair and balanced approach to deficit reduction and changes to programs, while promoting job growth and economic stimulus. This Super Committee will be working for ALL Americans.

The Debt Reduction Super Committee will have tremendous flexibility and power to change the future direction of the United States; and as a result must be accountable to the American public – which can only be accomplished through open and transparent meetings and records regardless of physical form. It is imperative that this Super Committee work in a way that restores Americans' faith in government.

Open government is good government. Distrust in government is not good for our democratic process – the public has a right to know what its government is doing.

I urge you to take the appropriate steps to mandate that this Debt Reduction Super Committee accomplish its work in the open, under the watchful eyes of all American citizens. Closing the doors to transparency will only foster further distrust of our leaders.

Vermont's Constitution and State Statutes deal with open government in a very succinct way:

"That all power being originally inherent in and consequently derived from the people, therefore, all officers of government, whether legislative or executive, are their trustees and servants; and at all times, in a legal way, accountable to them." (Vermont Constitution Article 6.)

“Officers of government are trustees and servants of the people and it is in the public interest to enable any person to review and criticize their decisions even though such examination may cause inconvenience or embarrassment.” (1 V.S.A. § 315)

Open and transparent government is a burden on government that should be embraced. American citizens, and the world, are watching – it is important to restore faith and trust in America.

Sincerely,

James C. Condos
Vermont Secretary of State

Cc: The Honorable House Majority Leader Eric Cantor
The Honorable House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi
The Honorable Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid
The Honorable Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell
The Honorable Senator Patrick Leahy
The Honorable Senator Bernie Sanders
The Honorable Representative Peter Welch