

DIANA DeGETTE
1ST DISTRICT, COLORADO

2335 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-4431
FAX (202) 225-5657

DISTRICT OFFICE:
600 GRANT STREET, SUITE 202
DENVER, CO 80203
(303) 844-4988
FAX (303)844-4996

<http://degette.house.gov>

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4329

CHIEF DEPUTY WHIP
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND
COMMERCE
RANKING MEMBER
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND
INVESTIGATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
ENVIRONMENT AND THE ECONOMY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS
AND TECHNOLOGY

July 26, 2011

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232 U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. President, Speaker Boehner, and Leader Reid:

I am writing to express the outrage of the residents of Colorado's First Congressional District at the partisan gridlock that continues to grip Washington, and now steers our nation towards irrevocable economic crisis. We need to act together to resolve our disagreements and show the world that our democracy can still work.

With one week left before our nation is driven into a default on our debt caused by your inability to come to a "grand bargain," I reiterate my call from last week to immediately begin a three-step process that will resolve the pending default crisis, ensure deficit reduction, and preserve the long-term solvency of Social Security and Medicare. These three issues should never have been conflated in the first place, but because they were, we now stand on the precipice of an unprecedented crisis of our own making. For the good of our nation, we must take the following immediate steps:

- Raise the debt limit by \$2.5 trillion. Period. Disagreeable as it may be for some, this necessary step should not be held hostage by budget negotiations around spending and budget balancing. The United States cannot stop paying its bills for debts already incurred. Given the extraordinary stalemate amongst the negotiators, rating agencies have unfortunately already warned of downgrades if all we do is raise the debt ceiling. That is why a vote to simply raise the debt ceiling should also include a binding agreement to immediately get to work on a true and lasting solution to our underlying fiscal problems.
- After the full faith and credit of the United States have been secured by raising the debt ceiling, all parties should come together to hammer out a budget and deficit reduction

plan on a bipartisan basis. We need to realize that some of the choices will be difficult and some unpopular, but they must be made. We should not use these talks to put forth an ideological agenda that does not save money for our national budget. Instead, we should open every program to scrutiny, including defense, agriculture subsidies, and domestic programs. And we should keep an eye on equity and shared sacrifice, meaning revenue must also be on the table.

- We should not use Social Security and Medicare as bargaining chips for deficit reduction. We must recognize they are separate trust funds which, while solvent for the next few years and decades, must be reviewed for long-term viability. I urge creation of a bipartisan commission, similar to Ronald Reagan's National Commission on Social Security Reform, to review the details of those programs as they affect future generations, while realizing that current beneficiaries have made their retirement plans around current frameworks and cannot reasonably accept changes. This Commission should make its recommendations to Congress and the White House by the end of this year.

As a senior Member of Congress, I share my constituents' outrage and frustration over the process that has led us down this path. Over the past few weeks I have had numerous conversations with many of my colleagues across the aisle. Unfortunately, while individual Republicans remain privately open to compromise, the Republican caucus as a whole continues to be fully committed to a "my way or the highway" approach to raising the debt ceiling – an irresponsible strategy to representing the American people.

It is time for Congress and the Administration to do the responsible thing and raise the debt ceiling, rather than hold it hostage to solving the longer-term fiscal challenges facing our nation.

Sincerely,



Diana DeGette