

Open Letter to Congress: Strengthen Fiscal Controls

Dear Members of Congress:

We, the undersigned organizations, write to express our deep concern with the nation's finances and our united desire to seek lasting fiscal responsibility. The total federal debt exceeds \$20 trillion. This fact alone ought to warrant universal outrage, but instead, many continue to put the national debt – and more significantly, the unsustainable spending that drives it – on the back burner.

The last decade has shown both promise and setbacks on fiscal policy. Structural rules have effectively restrained some discretionary spending, but major portions of the budget remain untouched. Much work remains to be done, as total public debt continues to rise – by more than \$5 trillion since 2011 alone.

In crafting future spending and debt legislation, we urge lawmakers to keep the following shared principles in mind as first steps toward good government and fiscal sanity:

- **Extend spending limits into the future.** The last six years have shown great success in pulling down discretionary spending from its all-time highs in the years after the Great Recession. Any changes to current discretionary spending caps should be fully offset with other reforms and spending cuts. Lawmakers should pursue all available options for continuing spending limits after the scheduled expiration of the Budget Control Act limits.
- **Leverage debt limit to adopt better spending controls.** Few budget experts would suggest that the status quo is satisfactory when it comes to the debt limit. We object to any move to suspend the U.S. debt limit or to extend it without adopting a binding mechanism or policy that can force a regular conversation on spending restraint. These could include but are not limited to adoption of a balanced budget amendment or a statutory spending and debt brake with enforcement mechanisms.

Ultimately, fiscal conservatism is an issue that involves fights on many fronts. Each undersigned organization has unique specialties and priorities.

As Congress moves forward with its agenda, we urge you not to forget the “true tax,” as Milton Friedman once characterized runaway spending, and to take all available steps to rein it in.

Sincerely,

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Coalition to Reduce Spending

Lisa B. Nelson, CEO
ALEC Action



Andrew F. Quinlan, President
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