October 13, 2005

An Open Letter to the United States Congress: Keep All Budgetary Options ‘on the Table’ to Offset Hurricane Costs and Address Ongoing Spending Problems!

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of the 350,000 members of the National Taxpayers Union (NTU), I urge you to support Speaker Hastert’s four-point plan on fiscal restraint, and encourage you to examine all aspects of the budget for savings. The good news from Congress’s perspective is that repeated tax cuts have spurred economic growth, thus leading to an astounding 14.6 percent jump in tax receipts over just last year. Unfortunately, spending has grown out of control in recent years – 33 percent since 2001 – and in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the budget deficit will continue to rise.

The simple fact that the budget deficit is a direct result of overspending makes it exceedingly important for Congress to rally around the Leadership’s four-point plan to increase mandatory savings in this year’s budget reconciliation, cut discretionary spending across the board, work with the President on rescinding prior spending operations, and eliminate duplicative, wasteful, and unnecessary programs. The strength of this plan is that it proposes needed cuts to both mandatory and discretionary spending and it does so in a way that will result in genuine, long term fiscal restraint.

It is important that all areas of the budget are considered for cuts, since indeed all areas of the budget have grown rapidly in recent years. Defense spending has risen by an average of 13.2 percent annually since 2001, Medicaid expenditures have grown by nearly 10 percent annually, and spending on education has jumped by 19 percent per year. These few examples of widespread budget bloat clearly illustrate the potential for modest restraint as proposed by the Leadership.

Although some have already complained about the proposed cuts – notably the Chairmen of the Homeland Security and Armed Services Committees – there is more than enough fat to trim even in these areas of the budget that are integral to the War on Terror. Weapons systems like the F/A-22 that were originally developed to fight the Cold War must be re-evaluated given budgetary realities, and there is no question that Homeland Security funds should be directed to protect prime terrorist targets rather than being spread nationwide in a manner resembling the earmarking process in the Highway Bill.

NTU and its members consider out-of-control spending to be the single most important issue facing America today, and we urge Congress to act now to restore fiscal sanity to Washington. We look forward to working with Members of both parties to promote an agenda of fiscal restraint, and we wish to note that all spending votes are included in our annual Ratings of Congress.

Sincerely,

Paul J. Gessing
Director of Government Affairs