



# THE CONCORD COALITION

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December 17, 2013

The Honorable Reid Ribble  
United States House of Representatives  
1513 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington D.C. 20515

Dear Mr Ribble,

Given the frequent breakdown of the budget process in recent years, The Concord Coalition commends you for working in a bipartisan fashion to improve the process in ways that will produce more informed, thoughtful and far-sighted decisions. In that regard, I would like to express our strong support for moving to a two-year budget cycle, which is the goal of the Biennial Budgeting and Enhanced Oversight Act (H.R. 1869), co-sponsored by you and a bipartisan group of House Members.

We believe that biennial budgeting would make the budget process more responsive to the fiscal challenges ahead. A two-year cycle would lengthen the scope of budgetary decisions, allowing for a more strategic approach. Ideally, the first session of each Congress would be spent setting priorities and establishing funding levels, and the second session would be devoted to long-term planning and oversight.

This change would help congressional committees to better manage their time and focus their efforts. Some of the time now spent on repetitive annual appropriations work could instead be devoted to critical long-term planning. In addition, it would give committees a valuable opportunity to focus more on their oversight responsibilities and to identify ways to improve government performance.

The value of building in time for adequate planning and oversight would go far beyond the dollars saved. Our nation's fiscal challenges require policymakers to evaluate existing programs and eliminate those that are no longer needed, ineffective, or are unaffordable. This is a crucial step in restoring public trust in government. Without this trust, the public will remain skeptical that broader reforms in popular spending programs and tax subsidies are necessary for a fiscal sustainability plan.

Recent budget brinkmanship and the reliance on continuing resolutions render it difficult if not impossible for lawmakers and federal agencies to implement strategies to address short- and long-term needs.



Lurching from crisis to crisis is not budgeting but chaos. A switch to biennial budgeting could provide some much-needed stability to the budget process and help to avoid the wasteful rush of deadline-driven decisions that simply push money out the door.

The Ryan-Murray budget agreement, while imperfect in many ways, nevertheless demonstrates the advantages of a two-year cycle. By agreeing on the top-line spending caps for two-years, the new budget will provide an opportunity for Congress to develop 2015 appropriations in an efficient and timely manner, thus minimizing the chances of an undesirable government shutdown.

While process reform is no substitute for the difficult budget decisions that need to be made -- particularly on entitlement programs and tax reform -- your bipartisan efforts on biennial budgeting could certainly move Washington in the right direction.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Robert L. Bixby", is written over a light blue circular stamp.

Robert L. Bixby  
Executive Director