

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 17, 2010

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Madam Speaker and Mr. Leader:

As you are no doubt aware, President Obama has recently held public forums with both House Republicans and Senate Democrats. Though House Democrats have yet to participate in such a forum, we write to ask that you follow this precedent and agree to participate in an open meeting focused on job creation and economic growth between leaders of both parties in the House.

There are no doubt significant differences between our respective approaches to create jobs, as was evident during the stimulus debate last year. As you may recall, at the time Republicans hand delivered to the President a comprehensive jobs bill that, according to the model of the President's top economist, would have created twice the jobs at half the cost of the eventual stimulus that President Obama signed into law. A year later, more than 3 million Americans have found themselves out of work, the unemployment level in America is 9.7% – much higher than the Administration itself promised during the first stimulus debate. Real unemployment is even higher at 16.5%.

Though we had different philosophical approaches, it is unfortunate that there was neither a public discussion nor an opportunity for the American people – especially small business owners -- to become more engaged in the discussion. Had there been such a discussion perhaps Congress would have produced a bill that more directly addressed our nation's economic problems.

Despite our differences, we believe that it is imperative for us to begin discussions and work together toward a shared goal of putting Americans back to work. As you are familiar, at the current time, the Majority Leader in the Senate is working on a legislation originally dubbed a "jobs bill," but as even you have acknowledged, will in fact do little to create real jobs or generate an environment conducive to sustained job growth. Last December, the House passed its own, so-called "jobs" bill that continued the failed policies of the first stimulus, was drafted without Republican input, was opposed by every House Republican and 38 Democrats, and which is widely believed to be dead-on-arrival in the Senate.

Clearly, we need a different approach to developing legislation that will get Americans back to work. Therefore, in the interest of complete transparency on the single most important issue of the day for most Americans, we ask that you join us for an open discussion so that we can begin to change a process that has not only polarized this Capitol building, but this country as well.

Though this bi-partisan meeting is only a first step, we believe that it is possible to find areas of agreement from which the foundation for real job creation can begin. Every accomplishment begins with the decision to try. The time to try is now. We stand ready to discuss this proposal with you at your convenience.

Sincerely,



John Boehner
Republican Leader



Eric Cantor
Republican Whip