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 *America*  
**SPEAKING OUT**



*What We Heard*

# *America's Greatness*

can be attributed to no one single quality, ideal, or value. But surely among them is a system of government that is accountable to the people. We cherish a democratic principle of “consent of the governed.” It suggests that the priorities that our government follows are those of the people, not of the politicians elected to represent them. Sadly, this central principle has been under assault recently in Washington.

Today, Washington has taken on a destructive arrogance, the priorities of the American people routinely displaced by the ideological and partisan goals of those in power. Throughout this Congress, Americans have spoken out against what they see as a misplaced agenda, only to have their voices ignored, stifled, and mocked by the majority party. This type of disconnected governance is destructive to our democracy and has shattered the trust between the American people and their Congress.

On May 25th of this year, House Republicans launched a new effort to alter this course and begin to restore these broken bonds of trust. This project, America Speaking Out, was created both to change the misguided policies Washington pursues and, just as importantly, to give a voice back to those to whom Congress must always be accountable to: the American people.

With the goal of creating a new governing agenda built upon the priorities of the public, America Speaking Out set out to listen to the American people and solicit their ideas and input, online and in person, regardless of party affiliation. House Republicans recognize that while Americans are craving a new policy approach, people are not interested in another agenda simply passed down to them from Washington. They are tired of being told what our nation’s priorities are. They want to help set the nation’s priorities. By listening and engaging people directly, America Speaking Out is making that happen.

Central to this new effort has been an innovative web forum – [AmericaSpeakingOut.com](http://AmericaSpeakingOut.com) – where

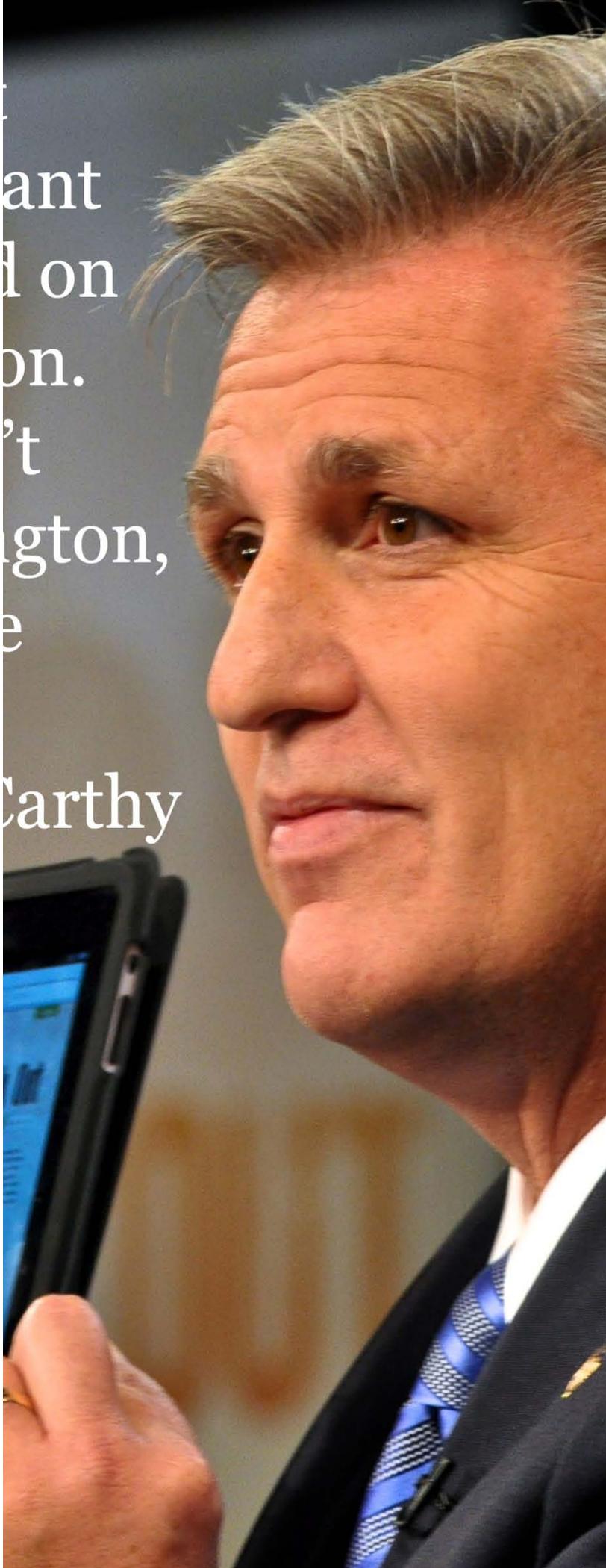
Americans are able to offer their ideas, vote on solutions from others, engage in a policy debate, and share their priorities with friends and neighbors through social media integration. From the moment the site was launched, a robust debate began, demonstrating Americans were eager to have their voices heard. In the months since, some 16,000 policy ideas have been posted on AmericaSpeakingOut.com with nearly one million votes cast and comments made on these proposals.

As Republicans, we know our principles. We understand that limited, more accountable government; economic freedom; lower taxes; fiscal responsibility; the protection of life, American values, and the Constitution; and providing for strong national security are the principles that allow the most Americans the most opportunity to achieve their own dreams. And as Republicans we also believe in a government that is accountable to the people. We are comfortable debating specific ideas with which we may disagree, but we are humble enough to know the priorities of the American people

“We recognize that Americans don’t want an agenda imposed on them by Washington. The best ideas don’t come from Washington; they come from the people”.

- Rep. Kevin McC





should always have precedent in Washington.

Devoting time to listen to the people's priorities is a simple idea, yet one that has been unfortunately too inconvenient for an arrogant Majority party in Washington. Through America Speaking Out and beyond, we hope to restore the voices of the American people to the legislative process in Congress. Thanks to the Vice Chairman of this project Rep. Peter Roskam, our GOP leadership, the entire House Republican Conference, and most importantly the American people, we have set the stage to introduce a new governing agenda built upon the will of the people.

*Kevin M<sup>s</sup> Curry*

Representative Kevin McCarthy  
Chairman, America Speaking Out

## Phases of America Speaking Out



### *Phase One – An Open Call For Ideas*

For a new agenda to be built upon America's priorities, rather than Washington's, it must begin with a clean slate. The launch of America Speaking Out was an open invitation for all Americans, regardless of party affiliation, to



GOP Lawmakers Seek  
Public Input on Agenda

share their ideas, concerns, and solutions for America. With a nation tired of being ignored, it took little time before AmericaSpeakingOut.com was flooded with ideas from across the nation. The robust debate that began in May demonstrated the passion for new ideas and it set the tone for all that followed.



“This is about trying to enlist the voices and help of the American people so we can begin listening and turning around the equation in this town.”

-Rep. Eric Cantor

## ***Phase Two – The Beginning of a Two-Way Dialogue***

While a dialogue about ideas was taking place amongst the

**THE POLITICO**

**GOP to Reply to Public's Suggestions**

community of users, bringing those ideas to life in Congress requires an engaged partner in Washington. Entering the second phase of America Speaking Out, House Republicans began to wade into the conversation, both online and at town hall meetings. Beginning with Congressman Paul Ryan and a plan to slash discretionary spending, members of Congress began posting video messages on AmericaSpeakingOut.com that offered ideas, but also encouraged the community to weigh in on them and offer their own. This dialogue was also carried out at the first wave of live town hall meetings hosted by Republicans back in their districts. By engaging Americans directly, House

Republicans were better able to narrow in on the priorities and concerns of the nation.

## ***Phase Three – Offering Solutions for Discussion***

Having engaged in a conversation about ideas for two months, a number of priorities began to take shape. Hearing that Americans were concerned about issues like jobs and spending, House Republicans entered the third stage of America Speaking Out by

**ROLL CALL**

**GOP Rolls Out Agenda Topics for Discussion**



offering a series of specific solutions to address these topics. At town hall meetings throughout the summer work period, ideas like freezing tax rates for all Americans and cutting spending were shared with the American people. The responses at town halls to these ideas and others allowed House Republicans to once again have the public directly shape the content of a new governing agenda, and we will demand that Speaker Pelosi bring these priorities to an immediate vote.

### ***Phase Four – Laying Out a New Governing Agenda for America***

Carrying out an unprecedented project of engagement with the American people, House Republicans are now preparing to introduce a new governing agenda to move our nation forward. Rather than telling Americans what will be done, this process of listening and dialogue has allowed the creation of an agenda that carries the stamp of the American people. When it is released, the agenda will stand as a new pledge to put America’s priorities first.

## **The Washington Post With Online Community, House GOP Plans to Find a Voice and Set the Tone**



## **Engaging Online**



Fundamentally changing the way Congress does business is not a small task. Giving Americans a new voice in their government required fresh thinking and new tools. Over the past few years, the minority party in Congress has earned the distinction of being leaders in innovation on the web

and in social media. When the technology behind America Speaking Out was proposed, perhaps the easiest task was selling the idea to House Republicans. When faced with an opportunity to further expand their connection to their constituents using cutting edge technology, the overwhelming response was "sign us up."

To build a truly innovative, interactive experience for the American people, Rep. McCarthy focused on an appropriately-named cloud-based platform called Townhall. Townhall would provide the code base for AmericaSpeakingOut.com and all accompanying applications and supporting efforts on the web. The individual features offered by Townhall weren't revolutionary on their own. The ability to submit and vote on user-generated content, tagging functions, Twitter and Facebook sharing, threaded comments, and even participation points have been used in applications before. But applying all of these features in the government space had never



been done before. If Democrats in Congress had their way, it might never have been.

Congress is not known for embracing institutional change. In the earliest stages of AmericaSpeakingOut.com's development, House Democratic leaders sought ways to make sure it never saw the light of day. Even now, AmericaSpeakingOut.com is hosted on a dot-com domain, despite the fact it is an official project. Speaker Pelosi's grip on any new dot-gov sites in the House guaranteed that America Speaking Out would live on a dot-com domain. The next two

months were spent designing and developing AmericaSpeakingOut.com, the ASO Facebook page, and mobile applications for the iPhone and Android that would allow Americans to participate in the program anytime, anywhere.

The initial response for AmericaSpeakingOut.com was overwhelming, both to the ASO team and the website itself. The first week saw a wave of hundreds of thousands of visitors. Thousands of users rushed to submit their ideas for a new governing agenda. They voted on others' submissions and participated in debates that many times ran into dozens and even hundreds of threaded comments per idea. Users tweeted their ideas and followed others using the #speakingout hashtag. The America Speaking Out Facebook Page saw dozens of insightful debates on the issues that are important to real Americans. Encouraged by the participation points offered on ASO, highly-engaged users quickly collected thousands of points and competed to become the top participant on the site.

While AmericaSpeakingOut.com was the base of America Speaking Out online, it was critical that the project go to where Americans already are rather than relying on them to seek it out. A strong presence on popular social media destinations like Facebook and Twitter, combined with mobile applications for the iPhone and Android platforms, would lower the barrier to entry for many Americans, who might otherwise have opted not to participate. The fully-featured America Speaking Out apps can still be downloaded free of charge at the iPhone and Android app stores. This comprehensive, multi-platform approach has engaged the American people in numbers surpassing even the most optimistic expectations.

At the time of this report, AmericaSpeakingOut.com had received 860,000 visits, with 75 percent of those being new visitors. While anyone could browse the ideas, vote totals, and debates taking place on the site, registration was required to participate. Nearly 100,000 Americans signed up to be a part of this project: a 10 percent

conversion rate, remarkably high for an email-verified registration process. This only confirmed what many have suspected - Americans feel they've been ignored by Washington and they have a lot to say. In fact, ASO.com users submitted 16,000 ideas and voted 800,000 times. What's more, they were engaged on the site for an extraordinary length of time. The average time spent on ASO.com is four minutes and thirty seconds. With billions of choices on the web, an average of nearly five minutes is an internet eternity and is further testament to the idea that citizens are eager to leverage technology to get directly involved in their government.

House Republicans believe that the project and forum itself have been invaluable in changing the way Washington works and the policies it pursues. Most importantly, citizens became more empowered to participate in their government - through the internet, social media, and direct

engagement, representing the future of American government. House Republicans will continue to focus on clearing a path leading to a Congress that truly allows all Americans' voices to be heard.

## Town Hall Meetings



While the technology behind AmericaSpeakingOut.com grabbed headlines, the web forum is only a part of the America Speaking Out project. Recognizing this technology would not find all Americans, House Republicans also focused on a more traditional vehicle for political dialogue: the town hall meeting. Since America Speaking Out launched House



*"[Rep Dave] Camp tried to offer a motion to recommit on Thursday that would've repealed the 1099 requirement provision, and is paid for by reining in subsidy overpayments related to the new healthcare law."*

*(The Hill, 7/30/10)*

Republicans have held hundreds of town hall meetings. More than a stump speech from a member of Congress, these town halls were focused on listening to the American people, asking for their ideas, and later discussing solutions to address our nation's challenges. Many featured white boards and chalk boards where ideas were jotted down, as well as suggestion boxes available for those unable or less inclined to speak up in a public forum. Some members even recorded video of their constituents posing ideas to be sent back to Washington. Through as many means as possible, House Republicans want to make sure the people's priorities are heard. Just as much

as AmericaSpeakingOut.com, these town halls and the feedback they produce will help shape the final governing agenda.

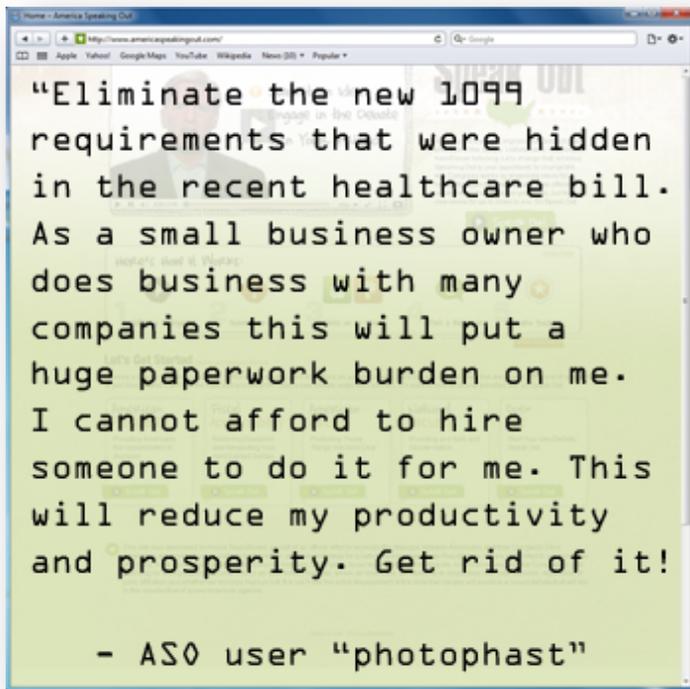
## **Turning Ideas Into Action on The House Floor**



Though deeply in the minority in the House of Representatives, Republicans pledged from the outset of America Speaking Out that ideas proposed by the American people would be brought to the House floor – not

*"The GOP will offer the Fed audit as a motion to recommit, the minority's last chance to alter a bill before final passage... The idea to use the bill as a motion to recommit stemmed from America Speaking Out, the new GOP organization aimed at soliciting ideas from the public in hopes of building a platform"*

*(National Journal, 6/30/10)*



*"House Republicans will try to force a vote on repealing the individual mandate in the Democrats' health-care overhaul, using a procedural maneuver to score political points on one of the most controversial provisions in the health care law... This push is part of a larger House Republican strategy to use a new online platform to bring Americans closer to governing."*

*(Politico, 6/15/10)*

just down the road, but as soon as opportunities presented themselves. In June, following through on that promise, House Republicans used one of the few procedural mechanisms available to force a vote on legislation – a motion to recommit – to bring what was the top health care priority of the American people up for a vote: repealing the unpopular new health care law. The ASO website was used to announce the motion, and ASO participants were contacted immediately through email alerts informing them that the vote would take place.

Later, House Republicans used the same procedural tool to force a vote on one of the most frequently posted ideas: an audit of the Federal Reserve.

On another occasion, House Republicans targeted a new job-killing, burdensome “1099” mandate being imposed on American small businesses. The idea to repeal the law has received broad support on AmericaSpeakingOut.com and is a regular concern voiced to House Republicans by small businesses back home.

While these proposals were voted down by an out-of-touch Majority party, they began a process of once again bringing the people's priorities to the forefront in Washington.

## What We Heard

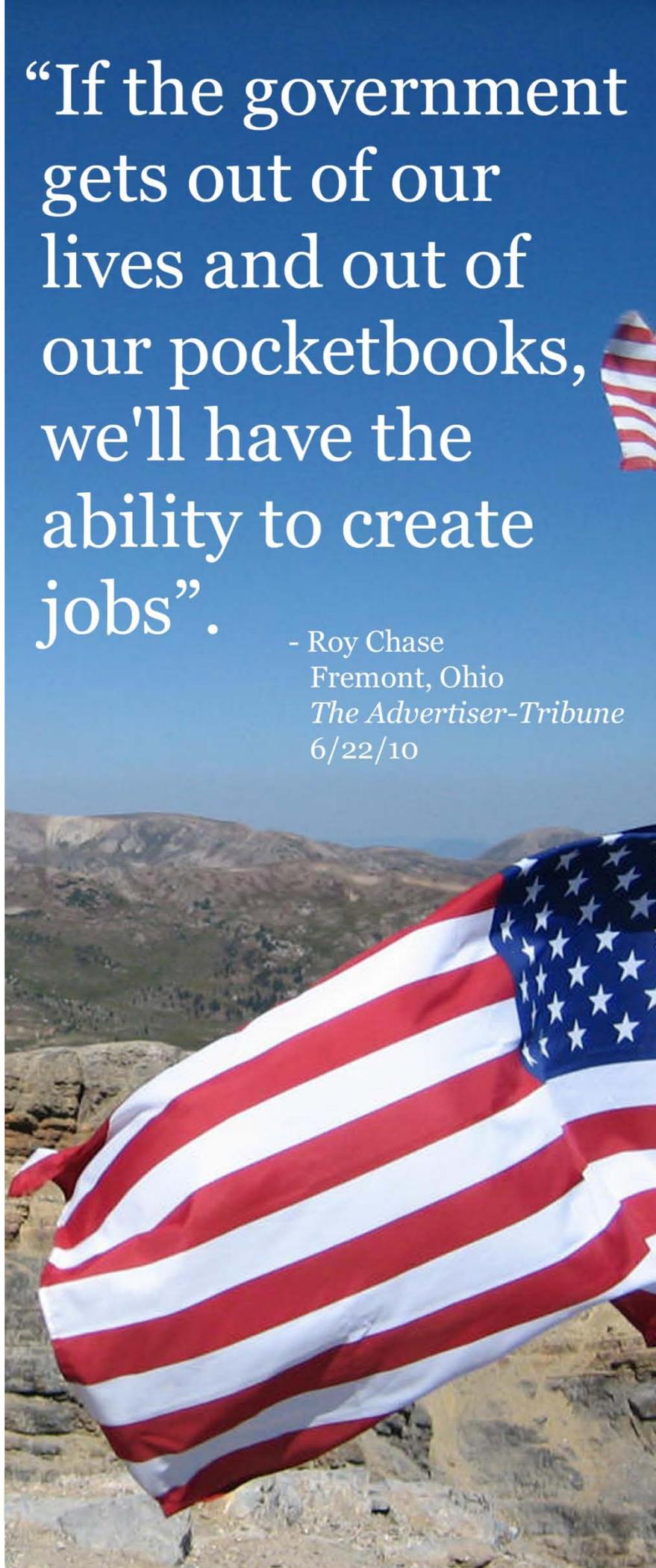


***From a Vast and Varied Collection of Ideas, a Clear Set of Priorities Materialize***

Through America Speaking Out, citizens across the nation, at town hall meetings, and online were provided an unprecedented forum to share their ideas for changing Washington. After years of being ignored, Americans seized the opportunity and earnestly shared solutions to the challenges important to them, their families, and their nation. The more than 16,000 ideas posted on [AmericaSpeakingOut.com](http://AmericaSpeakingOut.com) and the countless more offered at Republican town halls speak to a nation eager for a new policy approach, as well as a public

“If the government gets out of our lives and out of our pocketbooks, we'll have the ability to create jobs”.

- Roy Chase  
Fremont, Ohio  
*The Advertiser-Tribune*  
6/22/10

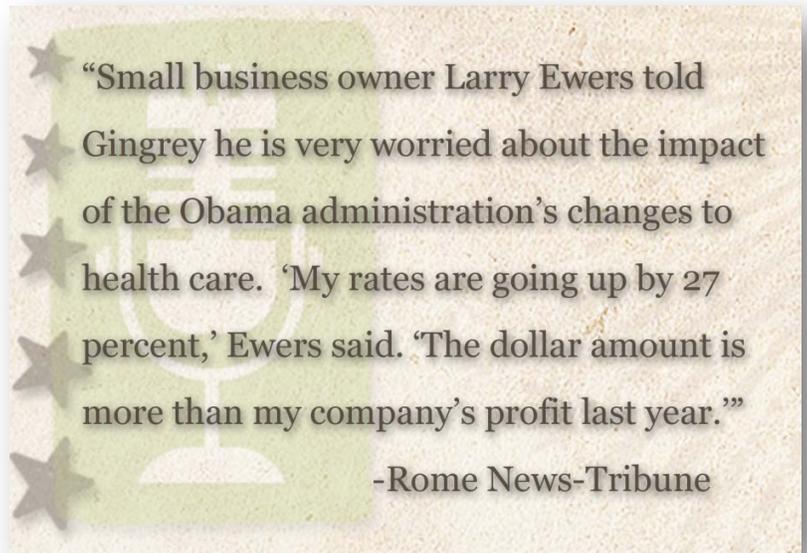


tired of seeing their priorities fall sacrifice to politics and partisanship in Washington.

The ideas that flooded this project were in many ways overwhelming. The volume, the passion, and the quality of contributions exceeded expectations. The full range of the political spectrum was represented. Citizens in every single congressional district in America participated. A true conversation of ideas was carried out on a wide array of topics. Of course, with such a broad, diverse universe of users, no exact, enumerated plan could be expected to appear unchallenged. Often contradictory and conflicting ideas were popular.

**Yet while the prescriptions varied, the priorities were undeniably clear.**

First, Americans want Congress to focus on creating jobs and growing the economy. Next and related, Americans believe Washington is spending too much money and needs to rein in its size and reach. Americans remain largely opposed to the government takeover of health care passed



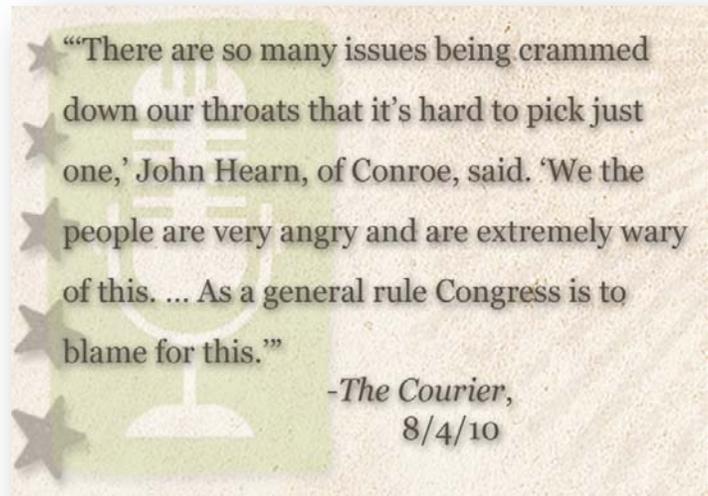
this year. Americans are concerned about national security, both threats from abroad and on our borders. And finally, addressed on its own and laced through nearly every idea collected, Americans believe Washington isn’t working and reform to Congress itself is needed.

The following is an illustration of some of the statistics, ideas, and comments that outline the priorities House Republicans have heard from the American people. These examples are not exhaustive, nor are all of them endorsed by House Republicans, but they serve as a demonstration that these are issues which

Americans want Congress to address. These are America's priorities.

### ***Americans Want Congress to Focus on Job Creation***

Americans have had a simple and straight-forward priority for Congress – job creation. From tax policy to government mandates and intrusion to uncertainty for small businesses, Americans have been speaking out about job creation. It does not take much research to recognize that people are looking to Washington for answers to near-10 percent unemployment. Yet instead, Washington spent the last two years toiling away on an unpopular health care takeover, a job-killing cap-and-trade national energy tax, a permanent bailout bill for Wall Street, and seemingly never-ending spending proposals. With at least 3,000 of the 16,000 ideas posted online focused on the economy, it's clear that Americans don't believe those in Washington are offering the solutions to create lasting, private sector jobs.



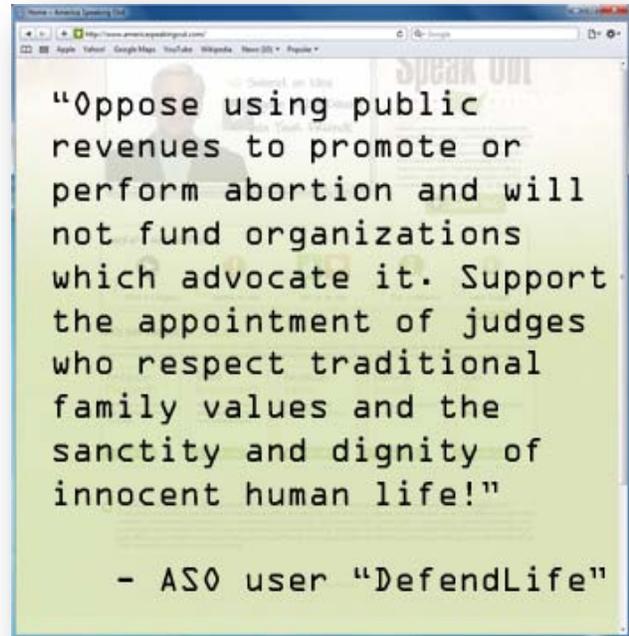
### ***Americans Want to End Washington's Spending Spree***

Reverberating nearly as much as Washington's failure to create jobs, an out-of-control spending spree in Congress has Americans speaking out for an end to the fiscal recklessness. The American people know that wasteful Washington spending is not the solution to creating good, private sector jobs. And while lost on those running Washington, Americans understand that our current deficits are unsustainable and threaten the prosperity of our children and grandchildren. Americans are making tough choices every day, only to see Washington's excessive spending

continue unchecked. With Spending ranking as the top vote-getting issue on AmericaSpeakingOut.com and the sentiment being repeated at countless town hall meetings, there is no doubt that Americans want Congress to rein in spending, end the bailouts, and shrink the size of government.

***Americans Reject the New Health Care Law and Would Like it Repealed and Replaced***

While Americans' top priorities are on creating jobs and reining in spending, this Congress spent most of its time focused on a health care bill that kills jobs and explodes government spending. Not only does the new health care law fail to address the core concerns of the American people, it moves us in the opposite direction. Americans were speaking out against the legislation when it was introduced, they spoke louder when it was being jammed through Congress,



and now after Washington ignored their pleas, Americans remain more opposed than ever to the new law. The mandates, the taxes, the government intrusion into medical decisions, and the taxpayer funding of abortion, all leave Americans wanting a better way. And they know there are positive solutions for health care reform, such as those to bring down costs, but people recognize the President's plan was not one of them.



***Americans are Concerned About National Security Abroad and on Our Borders***

While economic and fiscal security are issues fresh on the minds of the American people, national security remains a top priority. Just as terrorist threats abroad remain salient and chaos is thriving on our Southern border, those running Washington have devoted significant time and resources to importing terrorists to U.S. soil and *providing* them the constitutional rights of American citizens. The American people want to know Washington is working to keep them safe from threats at home, abroad, and on our borders.

***Americans Believe Washington is Broken and Congress Itself Needs Reform***

Laced throughout the ideas that populate AmericaSpeakingOut.com and those logged at town hall meetings is an undeniable frustration with the way Washington works. From massive bills that no one has had time to read to one-sided debates that allow no input from the minority party, to a lack of

accountability, the rules that Americans expect Congress to live by are not being followed. While process debates have typically never reach beyond the walls of Congress, the backroom deals, kickbacks, and political payoffs that have defined this Congress have brought focus to an institution that for too long has failed to meet its responsibility to those elected to serve. Americans are ready for a Congress that carries out its obligations with transparency, openness, and accountability.

***An Open, Uncensored Forum for Dialogue***

A reporting of the America Speaking Out project would be incomplete without addressing those ideas, both the sincere and the nefarious, that stand in contrast with conservative principles – or common sense, but still played an indelible role in the effort.

Without a doubt, AmericaSpeakingOut.com invited a number of vote-garnering ideas with which Republicans simply disagree, as well as a number of

ideas that were posted purely to disrupt a productive dialogue. That was to be expected, and in many ways, was the point.

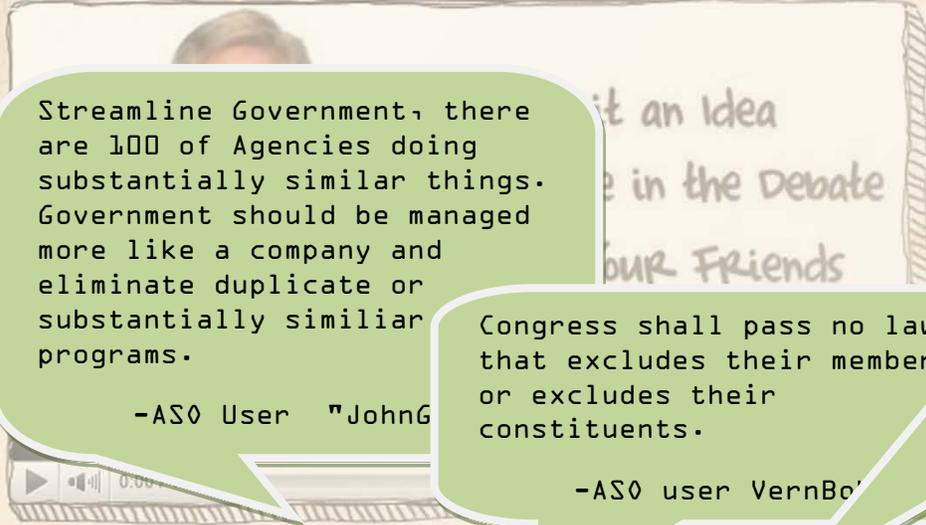
Being open to the American people means being open to all ideas and being exposed – to the good, the bad, and the ugly. Comfortable and committed to conservative principles, Republicans welcome a conversation of ideas when presented with a proposal contrary to certain ideals. Those ideas should not be censored, they should be debated, in the open, just as this project attempted to encourage.

Reaffirming the belief that Americans do want to have their voices heard and change Washington, AmericaSpeakingOut.com saw earnest ideas rise to top, while those meant to distract fell largely out of focus.

Openness and transparency, once given, are hard to take away. By providing a new window in Washington for the American people, this project advanced new dimensions of accountability and transparency that will only become

more relevant as technology and the internet continue to change the way America operates. Allowing all comers and all ideas to be brought to the table, a new way of doing business in Washington has already begun.

# Voices of America



Streamline Government, there are 100 of Agencies doing substantially similar things. Government should be managed more like a company and eliminate duplicate or substantially similiar programs.

-AS0 User "JohnG"

Congress shall pass no law that excludes their members or excludes their constituents.

-AS0 user VernBo

Put an immediate freeze on the stimulus package. No more stimulus. Put any and all remaining TARP funds back to pay down the debt. This was the original law, rule and intent of TARP. Block any further spending of TARP and Stimulus funds. Do not allow any further TARP spending under the guise of the "commerce clause".

-ASO User "bbforbis"

Lawsuit Reform .. prevent the lawyers and Insurance companies from stifling entrepreneurs and small business owners. Small business people in many cases don't even try to build a business idea because the insurance is so costly it's just not doable. Many talented people abandon their chosen professions because of the emotional and financial toll imposed by legal assaults. The lawyers and the insurance companies in this country control and HURT small business people more than taxes!

-AS0 User "Oceanhome"

Treat terrorists, foreign and domestic, like enemy soldiers. The current rules of prosecuting them in criminal courts don't work. This is a new type of enemy. In this war, they don't wear uniforms like the good old days. They are, however, still soldiers and should be prosecuted by the military, not civilian courts. Also, strip the citizenship of any naturalized terrorist. -

-AS0 User "JMBlue"

I think that we should post 12,000 national guard on the southern border to thwart illegals, drugs, and possibly terrorists from coming across the border. This would put 4 armed personnel per mile.

-AS0 User "jvan0608"

How about ending TARP entirely! Government should not be bailing out anyone.

- AS0 User "spynumber"

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# Tea Speaking Out

If the GOP is really the party of smaller government then I think they should advocate an across the board reduction of federal spending on the order of 5-10% to demonstrate it. This should be a centerpiece campaign issue. If the GOP really wants smaller government, then they will need to actually reduce the spending.

-ASO User "darby"

Enforce the idea that all Bills must be read before they are passed by congress. It is very disturbing that I even have to submit this idea!!!!!!

-ASO User "givemeabreak"

Amendment 28 - "Congress shall make no law that applies to the citizens of the United States that does not apply equally to the Senators or Representatives, and Congress shall make no law that applies to the Senators or Representatives that does not apply equally to the citizens of the United States ."

-ASO User "jec0212"

Require all legislation to have a SINGLE topic. This will eliminate all the buried, unrelated pork-barrel spending that gets inserted into legislation by integrity-challenged congressmen. If it's important enough to fight for, write a separate bill for it.

-ASO User "25yrUSAF"

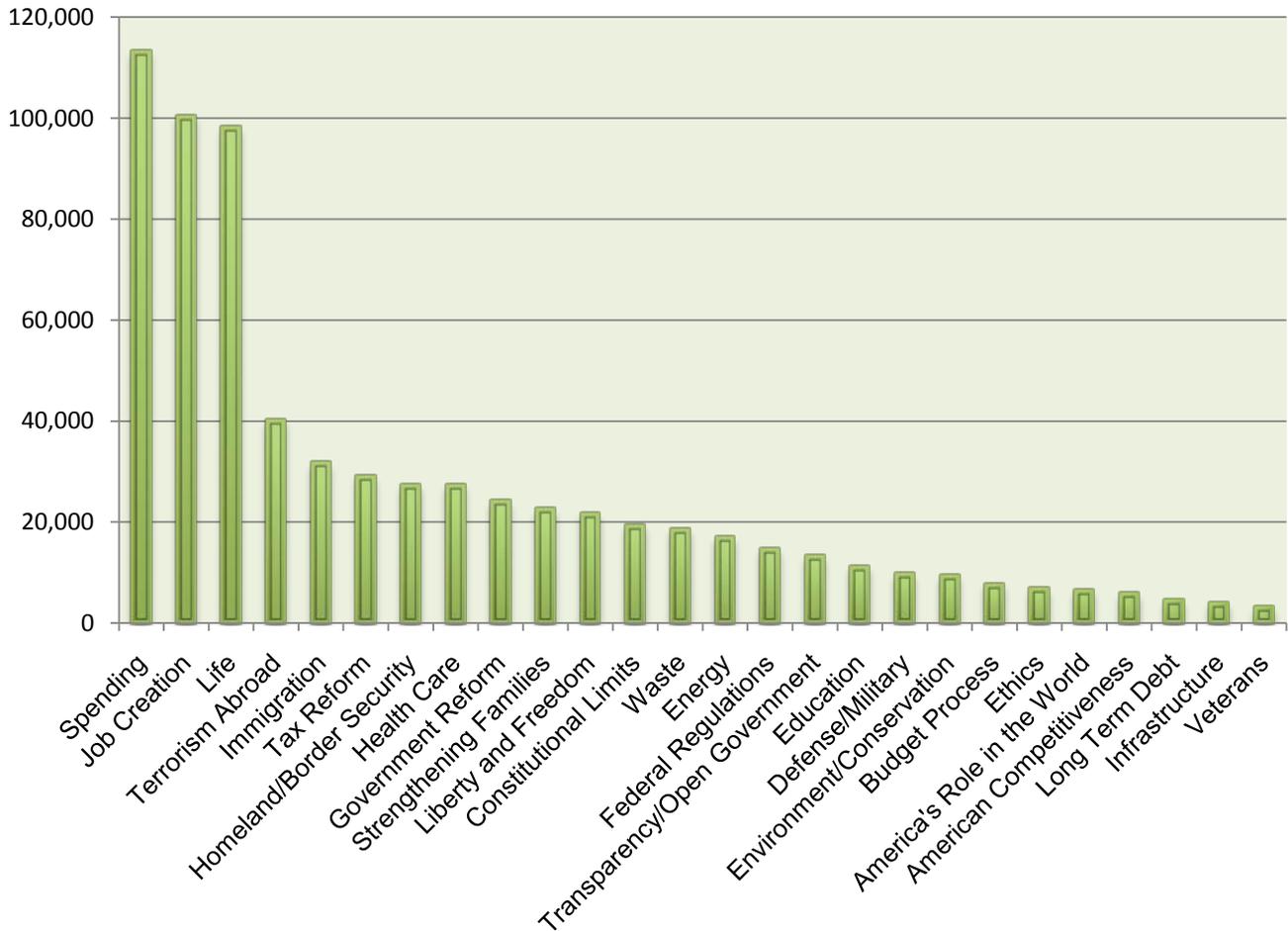
DEFUND, REPEAL, & REPLACE GOVERNMENT-RUN HEALTH CARE: Defund, repeal and replace the recently passed government-run health care with a system that actually makes health care and insurance more affordable by enabling a competitive, open, and transparent free-market health care and health insurance system that isn't restricted by state boundaries.

-ASO User "TeaParty"

Take back ALL unused TARP monies and apply it all to our deficit/long-term debt. and do it NOW - the Congress acts swiftly to GIVE money away...let's see the same speed employed in taking it back!

- ASO User "earthangel"

## America Speaking Out Total Votes by Issue



*In an open and transparent forum, a number of issues proved to have the attention of the American people. This chart demonstrates intensity of votes in the 26 sub-categories of [AmericanSpeakingOut.com](http://AmericanSpeakingOut.com).*

# Listening and Now Leading



Having heard the priorities of the American people, Republicans are now poised to present a new governing agenda that respects the voices of the American people and tackles the challenges on their minds. As elected representatives of the people, House Republicans have an obligation to lead with bold, bright ideas that address national priorities. Throughout this Congress, Republicans not only opposed the job-killing, big-spending proposals of the party in power, but they have also offered alternative ideas. The Majority tried to ignore Republican ideas, but they cannot stifle better solutions forever. A new governing agenda will show that Republicans are committed to positive solutions and American priorities.

By its definition, Congress exists to serve and represent the will of the people. While the institution has largely failed on that count recently, a new opportunity to restore its proper role is on the

horizon. The new governing agenda for Americans will not be a party platform or political wish-list. Instead it will be a pledge to the American people to fight for certain ideas that address their priorities. As our nation looks for leadership, this document will serve as a guidepost to restore certainty, trust, prosperity, and security to the American people.



Prepared by House Republican Leadership