



Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives

June 6, 2013

The President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Northwest  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

In an Oval Office meeting with the bipartisan congressional leadership on March 1 of this year, I asked the group for agreement that we should address the issues of funding the government and replacing sequestration with a broader deficit reduction package separately. You indicated you agreed with me on this point, concurring that there is no reason to inject shutdown politics into the already difficult task of finding a plan to tame our deficits. I emerged from the meeting that day encouraged that, despite our ongoing differences on issues of entitlement spending and tax rates, we were able to identify a shared commitment to keeping the government running while addressing the issue of sequestration separately.

I was surprised and disappointed, then, to read the two Statements of Administration Policy released this week stating flatly that you will not sign any appropriations bills to keep the government funded and operating unless Congress agrees to your demands on a broader budget deal. These statements run counter to the bipartisan agreement that was forged at the White House meeting on March 1, and appear to signal a jarring shift in your administration's position on a matter that is of critical importance to our nation's fiscal and economic stability.

I have long said that our goal should be to cut spending, not shut down the government. Your administration's sudden demand to increase spending and taxes – yet again – or else shut down the government can only be described as reckless. Indeed, a Capitol Hill newspaper reported this week that a White House official acknowledged “the administration knows it is stepping into dangerous territory.” As a president who has decried “manufactured crises” and said the economy should not be subjected to a “politically self-inflicted wound,” Americans deserve to know why you and the members of your administration would now willfully and needlessly raise the specter of a government shutdown.

As you know, under the proposal your administration conceived and first proposed, we already have a consequence for failing to achieve deficit reduction: sequestration. You and I agree sequestration is the wrong way to cut spending. In the House, we voted twice to replace it with

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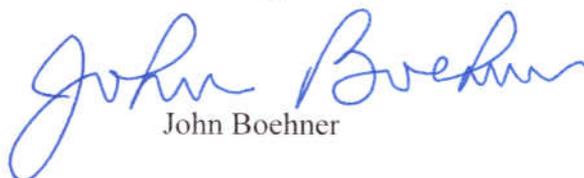
smarter cuts that protect key priorities. But sequestration is here, as a result of legislation that you signed into law, and you have said yourself that we should not make the situation worse by creating “another crisis”:

*“We agreed to a certain amount of money that was going to be spent each year, and certain funding levels for our military, our education system, and so forth. If we stick to that deal, then I will be supportive of us sticking to that deal. It’s a deal that I made. The sequester are additional cuts on top of that. And by law, until Congress takes the sequester away, we’d have to abide by those additional cuts. But there’s no reason why we should have another crisis by shutting the government down in addition to these arbitrary spending cuts.” (Statement by the President, March 1, 2013)*

As you have noted, sequestration exists to bring both parties together to find common ground. The House and Senate Budget Committee Chairs are engaged in regular order discussions about a deficit reduction framework. It should be no surprise that finding a framework for a budget agreement between the two chambers is a daunting challenge, particularly when the Senate Democrats’ budget never, ever balances. But at a time when such delicate discussions are underway, the introduction by your administration of such an explosive new dynamic – which contradicts your own words – needlessly injects a new element of uncertainty into our economy and further jeopardizes hopes for a bipartisan agreement.

I ask that you reject this reckless approach, reaffirm your commitment to the agreement we made on March 1, 2013, and retract your administration’s threat to shut down the government.

Sincerely,

  
John Boehner