



## Letter to The Next Speaker of the House *Statement by the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget* October 20, 2015

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The impending change of leadership in the House of Representatives will have profound implications for the future of this country. At a time when the nation's debt is nearly twice the historical average, and projections are that the situation will continue to worsen, the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget believes that the next Speaker of the House should govern by three fundamental principles to ensure that the country's interest remains paramount.

**Govern by regular order, not by crisis.** Regular threats of a government shutdown and default on our debt have created significant uncertainty that harms the economy as well as the public's confidence in government. Waiting until the last moment inhibits thoughtful discussion of structural reforms and new policy ideas, leading to minimalist solutions that continue the status quo and punt the problem to the next deadline. The next Speaker should make it a priority to deal with important issues well in advance of deadlines to allow a more thoughtful and responsible approach to issues than is possible in a crisis.

**Adopt a fiscal version of the Hippocratic oath: first, do no harm.** In tackling the myriad issues involved in keeping the federal government open, passing appropriations bills, tax bills, and other legislation, the next Speaker must avoid the temptation to resolve these issues in ways that damage our fiscal outlook. Too often a looming fiscal deadline produces a lowest common denominator "agreement" that avoids tough choices, combining each party's priorities for increased spending and tax breaks without regard to their costs.

**Turn a potential crisis into an opportunity.** The recent decline in deficits will soon be reversed, pushing the debt to even more worrisome levels. Addressing this reverse will require leaders in both parties to work together on a principled compromise to control our debt. Recent history has shown that when Congress relies on support from one party alone to pass legislation, progress is difficult and tackling long-term problems is impossible. A solution developed by leaders of both parties is not only more likely to receive the votes it needs to pass Congress, it will also have the credibility necessary to earn the support of the American public.

The next Speaker of the House will have a rare opportunity to place the country's fiscal future on a long-term stable footing. History and the American people will judge his or her success.