

M E M O

To: House Republicans

From: Leader Boehner

Re: America Can't Afford the Democrats' Economic Agenda

Date: October 8, 2008

The closing chapters of the 110th Congress have been written. We know now how the story ends, and it hasn't been the fairy tale Democrats promised when Speaker Pelosi took the gavel. Rather, it's been a grim story marked by the majority's broken promises and its leaders' open defiance of the clearly-expressed will of the American people. Given the chance to do great things on behalf of the American people, this majority squandered it, opting instead to consolidate power by letting radical special-interests drive the agenda and block much-needed reform.

For House Republicans, by contrast, the 110th Congress has been a time of renewal. While we still have work to do, we reconnected with our roots, put forth a bold reform agenda, and showed the American people we'll fight for them, even when the rest of Washington won't.

Americans are worried about the economy and they're fed up with Washington. They want reform, and the Democrats haven't provided it – and now, fueled by billions of dollars in special-interest money, Democrats are making a play for larger majorities and control of the White House, too. America can't afford this. Beginning today, there are three things we must do to bring our message of reform to our constituents and stop the Democrats' power play. We must:

- **Relentlessly drive our pro-jobs, pro-economic growth message (“[lower gas prices, cut the pork, stop the tax hike](#)”).** Our constituents' anxieties about the economy are well-founded, and the agenda Democrats have telegraphed for 2009 will turn that anxiety into agony for millions of American families. Sky-high gas prices, coupled with higher taxes on middle-class families and small businesses, will destroy American jobs and squeeze working families who are already desperate for relief. Democrats have promised their radical special-interest allies they'll reinstate the offshore drilling ban and pass a frenzy of new government programs and pork-barrel projects. Who will pay for these special-interest payoffs? Our constituents, through higher taxes and higher energy costs.
- **Seize every opportunity to hold Democrats accountable for their role in creating the economic crisis.** As I said last week, the economic crisis is a failure of a broken Washington, and a government culture that allowed executives at Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac and other firms to run amok, ultimately imperiling our nation's economy. For years, Republicans warned of this danger and advocated reform of these so-called government-sponsored enterprises (GSEs). And for years such reforms were thwarted by Democratic lawmakers with deep political ties to the worst offenders, putting the companies' interests ahead of the interests of our country. Republicans have a strong record of support for reining in the excesses of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. The Democrats who run Congress do not. They stopped reform dead in its tracks, and Main Street Americans today are [paying the price](#).

- **Take credit for what we've accomplished for the American people.** House Republicans have accomplished a great deal together for the American people during the 110th Congress, even up against a heavy-handed Democratic Majority that has broken every promise of fairness and openness it made back in 2006. Because of our dedication to the principles that make us Republicans, we've tackled the American people's biggest priorities with [a positive, reform-minded agenda](#). We've helped stop a spate of truly destructive legislation championed by our Democratic colleagues, and stood strong when the majority leadership tried to defy the will of the American people. It's imperative that we share these actions with our constituents and discuss their implications for the battles ahead.

For more specifics on each strategy, please read on.

HIGHER TAXES & HIGHER GAS PRICES WILL DESTROY AMERICAN JOBS

Democratic leaders are hoping to be crowned this January as the new kings of a broken Washington, and to make sure it happens, they've formed a not-so-secret alliance with well-funded special interests around the Beltway. These groups, which are pouring vast sums of money into Democratic campaigns, are banking on a big payoff in 2009.

- Radical anti-energy groups that oppose increased production of American-made energy are counting on Majority Leader Steny Hoyer to keep his promise that restoring the federal ban on offshore and oil shale drilling "[will be a top priority for discussion next year](#)."
- Trial lawyers are counting on Democrats to continue slipping pork-barrel giveaways into major bills to benefit their industry, while refusing to investigate widespread evidence of job-killing illegal activity in the trial lawyer business.
- Liberal lobbyists and groups are counting on Democrats to fund huge new programs, wasteful pork projects, and federal benefits for illegal immigrants – all at taxpayer expense.

This agenda has nothing to do with working families and small businesses – but working families and small businesses are the ones Democrats will force to pay for it, in the form of higher gas prices, higher taxes, and lost jobs. As if working families and small businesses aren't already suffering enough!

Working with our party's new leaders, Sen. John McCain (R-AZ) and Gov. Sarah Palin (R-AK), House Republicans will fight to fix Washington and fight for American families on the issues that matter most:

- We'll fight *against* the Democrats' largest tax hike in American history and instead fight *for* [a pro-jobs, pro-growth economic plan](#) rooted in lower taxes for middle-class families and energy reforms that reduce our costly and dangerous dependence on foreign sources of oil.
- Instead of increasing health care lawsuits and bureaucracy, we'll strive to guarantee access to affordable, high-quality, patient-centered health care for every American by [fighting for reforms](#) to reduce costs and ensure personal health care decisions are made by patients and their doctors.

- We'll battle wasteful spending and special-interest giveaways in favor of reforms that protect jobs and taxpayers and put the interests of our country first.

It's up to all of us to make sure our neighbors back at home are hearing our message of reform. In your town halls, speeches to rotary clubs, and anywhere else you might be in the weeks ahead, make sure your constituents know how House Republicans are addressing the very same issues they're discussing around the dinner table each night.

COVERING THEIR FANNIES: DEMOCRATS CAN'T DUCK RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

Enactment of the flawed but necessary economic rescue bill was not a cause for celebration. Thus, the image last week of Speaker Pelosi and other Democratic leaders smiling and beaming at a press conference as the bill was prepared for the President's signature spoke volumes. It's an image that should burn in the minds of angry American taxpayers this fall as Main Street America deals with the consequences of a broken Washington.

Politicians and bureaucrats failed the American people by being asleep at the switch while executives at Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, and other companies ran rampant. This failure imperiled our economy, put Americans' economic security at risk, and necessitated enactment of last week's legislation – and the Democrats who currently run Congress were at the heart of the mess. For years, Republicans sought reform of the GSEs, such as Fannie and Freddie, but Democrats – who have benefited handsomely from Fannie and Freddie-associated political contributions – blocked our efforts.

I urge to you read [the opening statement given by Rep. Chris Shays \(R-CT\)](#) at Monday's Oversight & Government Reform Committee hearing on the origins of the financial crisis, as well as [the detailed report released by Committee Republicans](#). Both documents chronicle Washington's failure to rein in Fannie and Freddie and the pivotal role they played in the crisis, and I encourage you to share them with your constituents.

Earlier this week, Chairman Henry Waxman (D-CA), under heavy pressure from Republicans, was forced to backtrack and agree to hold a hearing on the role Fannie and Freddie played in the financial crisis. But as of this writing, Chairman Waxman hasn't committed to a date, or a format, or to calling former Fannie Mae boss Franklin Raines to testify. It's imperative that the American people have truthful answers on the roots of the Wall Street meltdown, so the mistakes that were made are never repeated.

STANDING TALL AGAINST THE BELTWAY TIDE

The late William F. Buckley Jr. first described *National Review* as standing "athwart history, yelling Stop at a time when no one is inclined to do so, or to have much patience with those who so urge it." During this Congress, House Republicans personified Mr. Buckley's philosophy when we repeatedly stood up and yelled "Stop!" as the Democratic Majority attempted to defy the will of the American people on some of the most important issues facing our country. I urge you to remind your constituents about these efforts.

- Energy.** In August, when other elected leaders were jetting across the globe for vacations, politics, and book tours, House Republicans stood shoulder-to-shoulder with American citizens to protest Speaker Pelosi’s decision to adjourn the House without a vote on comprehensive energy reform. Gas prices have spiked by almost 60 percent since Speaker Pelosi first made her empty promise that Democrats had “a commonsense plan” to lower gas prices, and the Energy Department reported this week that home heating costs are poised to soar as well this winter. Our team wouldn’t accept the Speaker’s refusal to act on our energy crisis – and neither would the American people. All year long, we’ve been promoting [our “all of the above” plan to increase production of American energy, encourage more efficiency and conservation, and promote the use of alternative and renewable fuels](#). When the Speaker tried to shut us down on August 1 before heading into a five week break, we said “no.” The spontaneous House floor uprising sparked by Reps. Mike Pence, Tom Price, Lynn Westmoreland, and others became a national story – and a symbol of our resolve to give the American people comprehensive energy reform. We forced the Democrats to allow the expiration of the outdated ban on energy production off our shores and in the oil shale reserves of the Inter-Mountain West. It was a major victory against tough opponents who just weeks ago called renewed energy production “a hoax on the American people” and refused to schedule it for a vote. But we stood on principle and prevailed.
- Iraq.** We made the words “slow bleed” the trademark of the Democrats’ plans to choke off funding for our troops, and time and time again, we defeated their attempts to hamstring our generals with arbitrary and politically-motivated timelines. Because of our unity, our troops were given the time and the tools they needed to succeed under the surge, and today, they are closer than ever to returning home safely and in victory. And with our party’s new leaders, [we’ll fight to give our Armed Forces and intelligence officials all the tools they need](#) to keep us safe and defeat those around the world whose main goal in life is the destruction of America and our allies.
- Earmark Reform.** Washington is badly broken, and the congressional spending process has become one of its most visible symbols. House Republicans took some [important steps](#) toward fundamentally reforming that process during this Congress. Think back to our retreat at the beginning of this year, when we had an intense Conference-wide conversation on earmark reform. We emerged from our retreat pledging “no more airdrops” and “no more monuments to me.” We adopted these standards unilaterally, and challenged the Democratic majority to do the same, while also calling for a bipartisan ban on all earmarks until spending reform is enacted. Democrats refused all of these challenges. They showered their freshman legislators in taxpayer-funded pork, and passed a continuing resolution loaded with thousands of airdropped earmarks that have never been debated. Our team has much work left to do on this issue, but we’ve begun to show the American people there is a difference between the two parties in terms of our willingness to change the earmark culture that has become the pre-eminent symbol of a broken Washington. Standing on principle alongside our Party’s new leaders, Sen. McCain and Gov. Palin, we’re poised to make that difference much more vivid in the next Congress.
- Stopping the Original Paulson-Democrat Plan.** When the rest of Washington was hell-bent on rushing through an irresponsible bill, House Republicans and Sen. John McCain stood in the face of the stampede on behalf of taxpayers and said “no.” As a result, we secured numerous changes on behalf of American taxpayers, such as raising the FDIC insurance cap, the SEC’s

change to mark-to-market rules for certain assets that have worsened the credit crisis, and an insurance program that forces Wall Street to bear a financial burden in the rescue package. House Republicans also were successful in stripping from the original Paulson-Democrat bailout plan of its special-interest earmarks for trial lawyers, labor bosses, and thinly-veiled political organizations like ACORN. Whether you voted for the final version of the bill or not, the stand House Republicans took made an impact for American taxpayers.

- **Long-Fought Victories.** We've fought, and continue to fight, against the hundreds of billions in tax hikes that the Majority has brought to the floor in this Congress. We stood against those who sought to lard up last year's appropriations bills with more wasteful Washington spending – a clear defeat for the Left if there ever was one. We beat back the Majority's attempts to provide taxpayer-funded SCHIP benefits to adults and illegal immigrants. We thwarted efforts to cut off funding for the ground-breaking school choice program in the District of Columbia. We exposed the Democrats' "card check" bill for the undemocratic scheme to empower union bosses that it really was. We forced the Majority to accept a Watergate-style special committee to investigate the infamous August 2, 2007 stolen vote – a committee that found Democrats got the vote wrong after all. We won dozens of motions to recommit – turning this once little-known procedural tool into a successful way to split Democrats and achieves substantive Republican policy victories for the American people. And in a victory for free speech and open government, we even beat back a Democratic proposal that would have prohibited legislators and their constituents from communicating with each other via websites that do not appear on a list of "approved" sites created by a government panel.

These occasions of yelling "Stop!" in the face of a Democratic legislative onslaught should make all of us proud.

DOING THE RIGHT THINGS FOR THE RIGHT REASONS

In the weeks ahead, we have one more mission to carry out on behalf of our constituents in this Congress, and it's the mission I've outlined above. We must carry our message aggressively and positively to the American people in the days that remain. The stakes have never been higher. The future of our country is at stake.

The last two years have been challenging for the American people. But as we end this session and return to our constituents, I hope all of us have an appreciation for what we've achieved for the American people against some considerable odds. As you've often heard me say: when you do the right things for the right reasons, good things will eventually happen. Throughout this Congress, our team has always focused on doing the right thing, even when doing the right thing has looked difficult or politically perilous. This is the definition of leadership, and it's the kind of leadership America is going to need in Congress if we're serious about fixing Washington.

I'm inspired on a daily basis by your courage and integrity. It's truly a privilege to serve as your Leader, and I'm deeply honored to fight with you for the principles we and millions of Americans hold dear. Thank you for all you do for your constituents and our country.