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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6100

April 26, 2011

The Honorable Kent Conrad
Chairman
Senate Committee on the Budget
624 Senate Dirksen Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Conrad,

Under your leadership, the Committee on the Budget has received testimony from witness after witness that this country is quickly heading for a fiscal and economic disaster. As you recently said, "the nation is headed for a fiscal cliff." We agree.

Given our current situation, the fiscal year 2012 budget resolution we hope you will bring forward very soon could be the most important budget the Senate has contemplated in our lifetimes. It is our belief that the most important budget we will have ever worked on deserves the most open process we have ever had.

In recent years, budgets have been presented, marked up and passed out of committee in less than 48 hours—with hardly any time for the public or committee members to read, much less analyze, the resolutions' content. However, in the more distant past, the Committee would sometimes take several days to review and amend the proposed budget.

We therefore request that the proposed budget resolution, the Chairman's mark for fiscal year 2012, be released and posted online no less than three days before we first meet to mark-up the budget so that every member of the Committee, and the public at large, can have a better chance to consider the proposal and ask questions about it. This is especially important because there is no clear consensus in the Senate on how to proceed with a budget this year and, if the differences between our two parties are to be resolved, it is here in this chamber where that must occur.

We also request that Committee members have ample time to offer amendments to perfect the resolution in open public meetings. Each of us, duly sworn Senators, were sent here by our constituents to serve the public interest, and we must ensure that their demands for imposing budgetary discipline in Washington are met.

Most importantly, having an open, public process in the Senate allows the American people to directly participate in the decision over how we spend their money. The American people do not, and should not, trust Washington with their tax dollars—for years it has frittered away those tax dollars and brought our nation to the brink of insolvency.

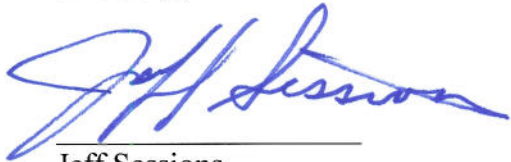
Only by holding an open and thorough review of the budget in committee can we directly engage the American people in a process that, by right, belongs to them. Our debate can be broadcast across the country so that the millions who are impacted by our decisions can participate in their making. It is they, not us, who are in charge.

You have been an advocate for transparent government. We hope to join you in ensuring that, as the Senate delves into this difficult but crucial process, the public we serve will not be locked out by yet one more closed Washington door.

The nation will be watching.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and welcome any questions you may have regarding these requests.

Sincerely,



Jeff Sessions
Ranking Member



Charles Grassley



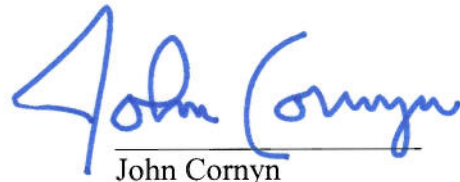
Mike Enzi



Mike Crapo



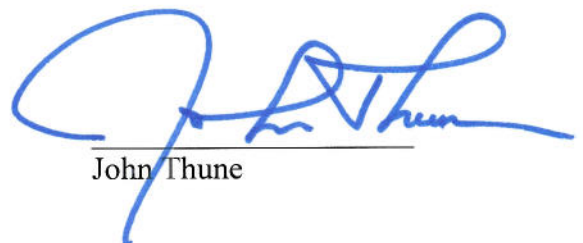
John Ensign



John Cornyn

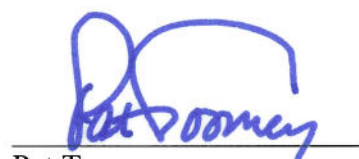


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