

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6100

March 19, 2012

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker of the House
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Eric Cantor
Majority Leader
H-329, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Boehner and Leader Cantor:

We write to express our concern at media reports that the House is considering setting an FY 2013 discretionary spending level that differs from the FY 2013 level established by law just seven months ago in the Budget Control Act (BCA).

As you know, the BCA established ten years of binding discretionary spending levels, reducing the deficit by more than \$900 billion over ten years. The legislation was the successful outcome of several months of negotiations between the Administration and leaders of both parties of the Congress. Besides substantial deficit reduction, the BCA had other benefits such as allowing the FY 2012 appropriations process to move forward, thus avoiding a government shutdown. In fact, the Congress was able to enact all 12 FY 2012 appropriations bills into law, thereby asserting the Congressional power of the purse to the fullest extent. Equally important, enactment of the BCA proved that even in a difficult political environment, the nation's elected leaders could set aside their differences and achieve significant results for the American people.

Should the House back out of last summer's agreement and attempt to lower the FY 2013 discretionary level, the House would delay consideration of the appropriations bills. This delay would significantly increase the likelihood of omnibus legislation – denying the majority of members of both the House and the Senate the opportunity to participate in a meaningful way in FY 2013 spending decisions. Importantly, the House's action would risk a government shutdown.

Furthermore, we believe that ignoring the BCA represents a breach of faith that will make it more difficult to negotiate future agreements. Rather than trying to tear down the BCA, we should be holding it up as an example of what can be accomplished if we are willing to set aside our differences and work hard to find bipartisan solutions to our nation's challenges.

We are proud to have supported the BCA and the deficit reduction it included. We are committed to maintaining the integrity of that Act and assure you we will do everything in our power to see that the Senate adheres to its strict terms and conditions. We urge you to reject the extreme elements in the House Republican caucus and keep to the agreement you made last year.



KENT CONRAD
Chairman, Senate Budget Committee

Sincerely,



DANIEL K. INOUE
Chairman, Senate Appropriations Committee