

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 21, 2011

Hon. Jeb Hensarling and Hon. Patty Murray  
Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction  
United States Congress  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Hensarling and Senator Murray:

In the past several weeks, we have received sobering reports on the dismal state of our economy. Nearly one in ten Americans is out of work. One in six Americans lives in poverty. And worst of all, more than one in five of our children live in poverty. These numbers are unacceptable and illustrate an American Dream that is increasingly out of reach for millions of families. We must do more to focus our national agenda on job creation and restoring our middle class. With that goal in mind, we ask you to take steps to ensure that your deliberations about deficit reduction do not worsen, and hopefully improve the jobs picture.

As many of us wrote last month, job creation should be a central priority of the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction. The loss of jobs drives up our deficit through loss of tax revenue and an increased burden on government-funded safety-net services. Of course, high rates of sustained unemployment and increased poverty have many other serious negative effects on the economy and on individual families, both short-term and long-term. Therefore, whether one's goal is reducing unemployment or reducing the budget deficit, there should be no higher economic priority for Congress than job creation.

Simply put, putting people back to work will help get our debt under control and, therefore, the Select Committee must make job creation a top priority as it weighs changes to federal spending and revenues.

To accomplish this objective, we request that the Select Committee adopt two principles: first, that each proposed recommendation be analyzed by the Congressional Budget Office to estimate the impact on employment. Most Americans believe that our top economic priority is job creation, and this information would provide the American public with a clear understanding of how the Select Committee's recommendations will affect their communities and their livelihoods.

Second, the Committee should adopt a "First Do No Harm" standard - at a minimum, its recommendations should not result in any net job loss and, ideally, that they maximize new job creation while meeting the deficit reduction goals.

In the coming months, your Select Committee will be considering a wide range of proposals with far-reaching consequences on our nation's economy. We understand that Democrats and Republicans have very different views of what the best strategies are for promoting economic growth and are deliberately refraining in this letter from urging the Select Committee to consider those policies we think would be most effective. Instead, we are simply asking that the Select Committee take steps to ensure that it, and the public, have an independent estimate of the impact of its proposals on job creation, so that the economic effects of its deliberations are fully understood.

Over the August work period, we heard again and again how Americans want to get back to work, families want to regain lost ground, and folks just want the opportunity to succeed as their parents did and their parents before them. It is our duty to work to expand, rather than diminish, that opportunity. It should be the priority of the Select Committee. We appreciate the complexity of the task you face and hope that you can develop recommendations that strengthen our economy and create jobs.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey A. Merkley

Shirley

Barack Sanders

Robert Menendez

Al Franken

Frank R. Lautenberg

Paul Begala

Bob Duff

Daniel X. Flanagan

Shirley Brown

Richard Blumenthal

cc: Members, Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction