

The Honorable John Boehner  
H-232 The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid  
522 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
235 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

August 8, 2011

Dear Speaker Boehner, Majority Leader Reid, Minority Leader Pelosi, and Minority Leader McConnell:

Our organizations strongly urge the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction to operate openly to the greatest extent possible in order to earn the confidence of the American people. Despite its unprecedented role in remaking the economy, the Joint Committee as currently constituted is subject to few transparency requirements. A closed process is inimical to the committee's legitimacy and our democratic ideals.

Because the committee's work will affect every American family, we urge you to ensure that it operates in a way that will engage and inform the public. We also urge that all efforts to influence the committee's work must also be subject to public scrutiny. We recommend the following:

**Information about the committee's legislative actions**

- ⤴ Post at least 48 hours in advance of a hearing all agendas, witness lists (including identifying information), and written testimony.
- ⤴ Contemporaneously publish online a list of committee votes, outcomes, and the questions put to the committee, with any supporting documentation, and with the votes of each member recorded.
- ⤴ Make the committee's report public 72 hours prior to the final vote. Also publish working drafts (including the chairman's mark) and amendments online.
- ⤴ Publish committee legislation online 72 hours prior to the final vote along with working drafts and amendments.
- ⤴ Publish proposals and supporting documentation received from standing House and Senate committees as received.
- ⤴ Disclose information relied upon by the committee, including all CBO analyses and scores, and data assumptions made by the Committee, including the baseline it uses, and any related CRS,

GAO, IG, or other reports and memoranda.

### **Information about the committee's operations**

- ⤴ Appoint committee members that support an open and accountable process.
- ⤴ Establish a central website where committee information will be disclosed.
- ⤴ Make all official meetings open to the public and the media.
- ⤴ Ensure notices of upcoming hearings are posted at least seven days in advance.
- ⤴ Transmit live webcasts and maintain archived video of all official meetings and hearings (including markups), and publish contemporaneous transcripts of proceedings.
- ⤴ Post a list of all committee members and staff online, their titles, and financial disclosure reports.

### **Communications with the committee**

- ⤴ Ask for and publish comments from the public on both the legislative language and its accompanying report prior to a final vote.
- ⤴ Provide a webform or other means to allow the public to contact members of the committee and its staff.
- ⤴ Post online in real-time all meetings between lobbyists or other powerful interests and committee members or staff. The posting should include, among other things, the name, employer, and client of the lobbyist, the specific subject of the meeting, the time and date of the meeting, and who else participated in the conversation. All written materials should be published online. Any verbal communications (except regarding purely logistical matters) should be summarized and published as well.
- ⤴ Post campaign contributions received by committee members within 24 hours of receipt to their campaign websites.

While this is not an exhaustive list, disclosure of this information would go a long way towards making the Joint Committee more open and transparent. If you have questions, please contact Sunlight Foundation Policy Director John Wonderlich at [jwonderlich@sunlightfoundation.com](mailto:jwonderlich@sunlightfoundation.com) or 202-742-1520 x 234, POGO Public Policy Director Angela Canterbury at [acanterbury@pogo.org](mailto:acanterbury@pogo.org) or 202-347-1122, or OMB Watch Director of Federal Information Policy Sean Moulton at [smoulton@ombwatch.org](mailto:smoulton@ombwatch.org) or 202-234-8494.

Center for Responsive Politics  
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington  
Feminists for Free Expression  
Fund for Constitutional Government  
Government Accountability Project  
iSolon  
Legal Publication Services  
Liberty Coalition  
OMB Watch  
OpenTheGovernment.Org

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Project on Government Oversight  
Society of Professional Journalists  
Sunlight Foundation  
Taxpayers for Common Sense  
Union of Concerned Scientists  
Washington Coalition for Open Government