

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

December 10, 2012

The Hon. Harry Reid
Senate Majority Leader
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Hon. Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Hon. John Boehner
Speaker of the House
U.S. Capitol, H-232
Washington, DC 20515

The Hon. Nancy Pelosi
House Minority Leader
235 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear President Obama, Senator Reid, Senator McConnell, Representative Boehner and Representative Pelosi:

The undersigned organizations are concerned that negotiations around averting the "fiscal cliff" may take place entirely in secret, and policy decisions will be passed down to the public as a fait accompli, with no public input or resulting accountability. While we understand that there should be room for private deliberations, we urge you to ensure that a minimal standard of transparency applies to the process.

Specifically, we urge you to ensure that any legislation resulting from your negotiations is online for 72 hours prior to consideration in Congress. The public, as well as those elected officials who are not principle negotiators, should have the opportunity to review legislation before it is voted on.

Second, we urge you to make public any side agreements, including promised votes on future legislation. All of the terms of the agreement must be subject to public scrutiny in order to establish if they represent the public's interest.

Finally, we recommend that meetings with lobbyists and others advocating a position on averting the fiscal cliff be disclosed online in real time. The influence industry is in full gear attempting to protect special interests, and their efforts should be made public.

Transparency around the coming negotiations represents our best chance to elevate substance and reduce undue influence. At the same time, it will foster accountability and greater public acceptance of the difficult policy decisions that will result from these negotiations, while returning to a healthy process where such decisions are made through regular, representative channels, in full public view.

Sincerely,

Institute for Policy Innovation

OpenTheGovernment.org

Public Citizen

The Sunlight Foundation

U.S. Public Interest Research Groups