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INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT AND RELATED AGENCIES
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LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

Steven C. LaTourette
Congress of the United States
14th District, Ohio

May 6, 2011

Dear Northeast Ohio TEA Party Leaders,

Thank you for your letter of April 28, 2011. Before responding to the specific items about which you inquired, I feel compelled to comment briefly on the text of your letter.

There are those in Washington, in an attempt to make a 'name' for themselves among Tea Party groups across the country, who continue to spin false statements about the budget, the continuing resolution, and Obamacare funding. Those would include the silly assertion that the final CR only cuts $352 million, that we ignored $105 billion in Obamacare automatic spending, and that passage of the Full Faith and Credit Act will make everything okay.

Secondly, while I wholeheartedly appreciate the support of Tea Party group members, I think it is worth noting that I was elected into office by 65 percent during the last election. The voters who put me into office represent various political points of views and various perspectives. I can assure you that I am constantly contacted by people and groups that represent a vast assortment of political views. As I am certain you are aware, I have been elected into office by Republicans, Independents, and Democrats during my time as a elected official and that is a fact which I am proud. While I certainly am appreciative of reminder of my obligation to represent the people of my district, I believe I have been doing that for 18 years and am cognizant of the reality that the 'people' have had the opportunity to 'fire' me 9 different times if they felt I wasn't doing my job.

I served and participated in the government shutdowns of 1995; the first balanced budget in decades; the impeachment of a President and hundreds of other matters in a way my constituents required. On H.R. 1, where you express extreme disappointment, I offered an amendment that made across the board cuts and reduced spending for the balance of this year by over $120 billion. On the NPR and EPA votes, I have explained to Ralph, but am happy to repeat, that this fight over spending can either focus on social agendas or money. The surest way to ensure that Obamacare gets implemented, greenhouse gases are regulated by the EPA, and there is no entitlement reform is to make this conversation about abortion, public radio and the arts.

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Despite many theories about the 2010 election, the fact is that Republicans were swept out in 2006 because 58 percent of Independents voted for Democrats, and we came back because 58 percent of Independents voted for Republicans. The election was about spending, and we run the risk of sending the Independents back to the other side by targeting things they like. When we talk about money, we win.

I would also be remiss if I didn't address one fundamental difference between 1995, when I voted to shutter the government and 2011. In 1995 we had completed the defense spending bills and they were signed by President Clinton. The shutdown only affected non-defense spending. In 2011, the Democrats failed to pass a budget or any bills. A government shutdown would have impacted our defense, and more importantly, would have stopped paychecks from being issued to our soldiers. I happened to meet a 19 year member of the Army last week from Trumbull County. He will leave his family in the States for his third deployment in Afghanistan next week. He described to me the great anxiety he encountered when he was advised he would not be paid on the eve of his deployment. The CR votes which you are disappointed by achieved the best deal the Speaker could get signed into law and averted the disruption in military pay. The 'patriots' who voted against the CR include Dennis Kucinich, Maxine Waters, Barney Frank and Nancy Pelosi. I'm not at all ashamed at not being on their side of the issue.

Now, to your questions:

1. I always have and will continue to vote against tax increases.

2. The Pledge to America says that 'we will roll back government spending to pre-stimulus, pre-bailout levels, saving us at least $100 billion in the first year alone.' I will continue to support that, but will not allow some of our Members to demagogue the difference between budget authority and outlays.

3. To promise to vote against raising the debt ceiling in any form is irresponsible. I will vote against a 'clean' debt increase, but should it contain spending cuts, I will evaluate the package.

4. I will co-sponsor the Full Faith and Credit Act

5. I have as recently this week supported all legislation to defund Obamacare and will continue to do so.

6. The Ryan Budget Resolution has been approved and there will be no further budget votes for the balance of this year. As a member of the Appropriations Committee that will be originating all of the spending bills for Fiscal 2012 I will not vote for any spending bill that isn't below the budget resolution. The $1 trillion number is a made up number.

Thank you for your correspondence. I am grateful for the opportunity to respond to your concerns and share an open dialog. Should you have any further concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me again.

Very truly yours,

Steven C. LaTourette

Member of Congress

CC: Arzella Melnyk

Mike Petruziello

Ralph King

Tom Zawistowski

Jean C. Coe

Diana Price