

TO: Republican Colleagues

FR: Eric Cantor

DT: October 3, 2013

RE: Current State of Play, Strategy, and Goals

I wanted to take a moment and provide an update as to how I see things developing with respect to the government shutdown. We are really in an unprecedented place. Consider the following:

The President of the United States is refusing to actively engage to end the current impasse. Respected author Bob Woodward has called President Obama's avoidance of talks "baffling." The President and his team's absence is in stark contrast to the last Democrat President. During government shutdowns in 1995, President Clinton actively engaged Republican leaders in an attempt to find a solution.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, not only refuses to participate in negotiations, he actually took the extra step to procedurally kill, on a party-line vote, the House's formal request, backed by 7 House Democrats, to form a Conference Committee to resolve the current impasse.

And with the shutdown occurring, House Democrats, Senator Reid, and President Obama have gone a step farther, refusing to even agree to common sense items to keep funding for veterans benefits and allow the District of Columbia to spend its local funds despite the fact that in the last government shutdown the House and Senate on voice vote passed and President Clinton signed a bill to do the very same thing.

To make matters worse, the Obama Administration appears to be purposefully refusing to use the authority given to him by the Pay Our Military Act to bring civilian DOD employees back to work.

This shutdown is a result of President Obama and Majority Leader Reid refusing to reach across the aisle in a divided government, a problem that has sadly been a hallmark of this Administration.

One can only speculate as to why President Obama and Congressional Democrats are not only refusing to negotiate but now refusing to support or provide the American people with relief from the government shutdown. But I firmly believe their position is untenable. It is at odds with how even past Democratic Presidents have handled similar situations.

Because their position is unsustainable and because we are willing to negotiate to find a reasonable resolution, I believe it is critical that we continue to engage and offer meaningful solutions for the American people.

That is why over the next several days the House will pass bills to:

1. Reopen the NIH and ensure that all patients have access to clinical trials (passed 254 to 171 with the support of 25 Democrats),
2. Ensure that our National Guard and reservists are paid,
3. Fund veterans benefits,
4. Reopen our national parks (passed 252 to 173 with the support of 23 Democrats), and

5. Allow the District of Columbia to expend their local funds (passed by voice vote).

I expect that in addition to these bills, we will consider other similar pieces of legislation to reopen critical operations of the federal government.

Once we pass these bills, it will be up to Majority Leader Reid whether he continues his obstructionist tactics. I would point out though, that doing so means opposing proposals supported by Senate Democrats. For example:

Senators Sanders, Hirono, Begich, Tester, and Blumenthal have introduced a companion bill to ensure that veterans' benefits are funded.

Senator Landrieu has called for adoption of a proposal to allow the District of Columbia to expend their local funds.

Our Strategy: While no one can predict with certainty how the current shutdown will be resolved, I am confident that if we keep advancing common-sense solutions to the problems created by the shutdown that Senate Democrats and President Obama will eventually agree to meaningful discussions that would allow us to ultimately resolve this impasse. The American people have elected a divided government and they expect us to work together and they will not countenance one party simply refusing to negotiate.

We must also not forget what we are fighting for: fairness and equal treatment under the law. Under Obamacare – which is now coming into effect – the Obama Administration has created thousands of special carve-outs for special interests:

The Administration has suspended the mandate that large businesses provide insurance, but kept the mandate that individuals purchase insurance or face a penalty under the law.

The Administration has created a special consideration – not in the law – to provide Members of congress with benefits under Obamacare that are not provided to anyone else in America.

Over 1,600 health plans for unions, state and local governments and others have been granted special waivers from the requirements of Obamacare.

These sweet-heart deals where the law applies to some but not others; where unions, politicians, and big business get special breaks but working middle-class families and small businesses are left to suffer is unacceptable. The last bill we sent to the Senate did two very reasonable things, it delayed the mandate for individuals for one-year so that families are treated just like big businesses and overturned the special treatment for politicians, ensuring that elected officials and appointees live under Obamacare.

It is unfortunate – especially for the men and women who work for the federal government and serve our nation so admirably – that we are in this situation. I am willing, as I know you are, to resolve this impasse. And I look forward to the moment when our friends on the other-side of the aisle decide to do the same.

Thank you for all your efforts in these trying times.

Eric