

*United States Congress*

Washington DC, 20510

May 28, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy:

We, a bipartisan group of representatives, remain committed to fighting the pandemic and the economic downturn to help the American people through this hardship. The unemployment rate is nearly 15%, and GDP could fall as much as 30%. We must confront the economic fallout from this crisis head on. As the crisis recedes and our nation recovers, we cannot ignore the pressing issue of the national debt, which could do irreparable damage to our country.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, the debt held by the public is likely to exceed 100 percent of GDP in just a few months, and it will hit record levels in a few years. In addition, trust funds for some of our most critical programs will face exhaustion far sooner than we expected as a result of the current crisis. Trust fund insolvency threatens serious hardship for those who depend on the programs.

We, therefore, respectfully request that further pandemic-response legislation include provisions for future budget reforms to ensure we confront these issues when the economy is strong enough. These reforms should have broad, bipartisan support. They should not stand in the way of our making the necessary decisions to deal with the crisis at hand. They should ensure that, in addition to addressing health and economic needs, we lay the foundation for a sustainable fiscal future by building on reforms with established bipartisan support.

First, we must have common ground on the facts and keep this issue in our deliberations. The Fiscal State of the Nation resolution would increase the *transparency* of our fiscal situation by requiring GAO to present an annual report to Congress and the country detailing the fiscal health of the nation.

Second, we must create mechanisms to help Congress demonstrate greater *accountability* in navigating the decisions to restore our fiscal health and sustainability. Trust funds for Social Security, Disability Insurance, Medicare Hospital Insurance, and Highway programs face insolvency, now possibly all within a decade. Enacting a consensus process like the Time to Rescue United States Trusts (TRUST) Act would create special bipartisan, bicameral rescue committees to give these programs the priority and urgency they deserve. Other commission structures, such as those from the Sustainable Budget Act or the Budget Control Act's joint select committee, provide models for a comprehensive fiscal agreement.

Third, the federal debt is growing at an alarming pace. Though emergency borrowing is necessary now, we must have a credible plan for *responsibility* to bring the debt burden to sustainable levels as the pandemic recedes and the economy recovers. We support a process for establishing overall budgetary goals—such as debt-to-GDP targets—that would reduce debt-limit brinkmanship as long as the budget remains on a responsible path.

Including budget reforms like these with any further pandemic-response legislation would put in place a plan to make sure that as we address our nation’s health and economic concerns, we will deal with our debt challenges at the appropriate time as well.

As the first branch of government, Congress can and must address current needs while planning for tomorrow. These bipartisan options can help us come together—as Americans—to build a brighter, more resilient future. We urge you to include them in the next pandemic response legislation. We stand ready and willing to work with you.

Sincerely,



Scott H. Peters  
Member of Congress

Jodey Arrington  
Member of Congress

Additional signers include:

Ben McAdams	Jim Banks
Dean Phillips	Tom Reed
Ed Case	Bill Huizenga
Stephanie Murphy	Mike Johnson
Kathleen M. Rice	Lloyd Smucker
Kurt Schrader	Dan Crenshaw
Derek Kilmer	Vicky Hartzler
Jimmy Panetta	Dan Newhouse
Cindy Axne	Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Tom O'Halleran	Mike Gallagher
Anthony Brindisi	Rob Woodall
Ron Kind	Warren Davidson
Kendra S. Horn	Brad Wenstrup, D.P.M.

Abigail D. Spanberger	Darin LaHood
Jim Cooper	Tom Rice
Jim Costa	George Holding
Henry Cuellar	Drew Ferguson
Xochitl Torres Small	Ralph Norman
Daniel W. Lipinski	David Schweikert
Collin C. Peterson	Ron Estes
Joe Cunningham	Mark Walker
Harley Rouda	Jason Smith
Ann McLane Kuster	Roger Marshall, M.D.
Colin Allred	Debbie Lesko
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Chrissy Houlahan	Adrian Smith
Terri A. Sewell	Jack Bergman
Sharice L. Davids	Mike Kelly
	Roger Williams