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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4401

December 17, 2012

COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES
(ON LEAVE)

COMMITTEE ON
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NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS AND PUBLIC LANDS

COMMITTEE ON RULES

CONGRESSIONAL WESTERN CAUCUS
IMMEDIATE PAST CHAIRMAN

10TH AMENDMENT TASKFORCE
CHAIRMAN

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Majority Leader and Minority Leader:

In 1794, James Madison, heralded as the Father of the Constitution, declared on the Floor of the House, “The government of the United States is a definite government, confined to specified objects. It is not like the state governments whose powers are more general.” One of the biggest problems undermining our nation’s financial well-being is the federal government’s stretch of the Constitution to assume responsibilities best left to state and local government.

Budget solutions based on Federalism principles and the return to a proper balance between federal and state government is essential to long-term fiscal reform. The looming financial crisis facing this nation is not a reason to avoid questions about federal and state roles in our modern society; to the contrary, this current crisis should compel us towards a renewed consideration of Federalism and the proper scope of government in the 21st century.

Instead of focusing the budget discussion on what to cut, as we have in the past, we ought to address what level of government is best-suited for administering particular programs. The key question is who should make the decision of what to cut and what to maintain. Federalism is premised on the concept that the level of government best-suited to the task of efficiently governing is typically that which is closest to the issue in question. Adherence to Federalism presents the most efficient way to govern a society and an economy because it assigns government responsibility and power to the level of government that is best suited to administer a particular task. Only by striking the proper balance between federal, state, and local government responsibility can we gain control over our nation’s financial future.

Federalism was the Founding Fathers’ formula for freedom. However, Federalism principles are often mistakenly associated exclusively with conservative ideology. This is an unfair caricature. Federalism is simply the way in which authority and power between states, the federal government, and ultimately the American people is delegated. It is neither conservative nor liberal, neither Republican nor Democratic. It is the principle that allows people to choose what

is important to them in their local communities. It is giving people an option on how they wish to live their lives. It is a Constitutional principle that protects freedom and liberty by safeguarding the right of people to make decisions that restrain the overreaching of government. It is a principle that has been neglected by both parties for far too long.

A Federalism debate should be the most important political, legal, and Constitutional debate taking place in America today. It goes to our very roots as a nation, and now is the time for a reinvigorated discussion as we seek solutions to properly address and protect our nation's and children's financial future and wellbeing. It was the traditional role of the Senate to protect the prerogatives of states. Now is the time to reinvigorate that constitutional role of the Senate. I strongly urge you to consider reforms that address the method by which government services are delivered to citizens, and to reinsert Federalism principles into the fiscal cliff discussion. The failure to do so will result in the continued practice of the federal government misreading history and incorrectly interpreting and applying the intentions of our Founding Fathers and the plain language of the Constitution. We cannot afford to lose another opportunity to enact reforms that will prevent our country from suffering from the same financial crisis in the future.

I would look forward to sharing ideas by which Federalism can help our country achieve solutions beneficial to current and future generations of Americans. Please contact my office if you have questions or would like to discuss this approach further.

Sincerely,



Congressman Rob Bishop

Cc: The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
1011 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515