

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 14, 2012

The Honorable Harry Reid
United States Senate
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
United States Senate
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid and Minority Leader McConnell,

More than three years have passed since Congress adopted a binding budget resolution. The Senate Budget Committee failed to mark up a budget once again this year, demonstrating that the budget process in this body is fundamentally broken. Each of the budgets slated for a vote this week faces substantial opposition from Members of whatever party did not introduce that particular budget. These budgets are being brought up in order to fail. In this light, the American people do not believe this week's budget debate will be serious. They know the Senate is not going to adopt a budget.

The American people know that, in an election year, too many of their representatives in Washington are afraid of the tough choices that would help get our nation on the path to fiscal sanity. Most of the people watching this debate will witness exactly what they've come to expect in Washington: Republicans blaming Democrats, Democrats blaming Republicans. At the end of the day, all we will have accomplished is filling another page in the Congressional Record.

We're not moving forward as a nation, and it's no surprise to the American people. They know from everyday life in their businesses and in their households that you can't move forward without a plan. When Americans look to Washington, they see no meaningful proposal, no viable plan, and no forward progress.

That's why I've been advocating my No Budget, No Pay Act (S. 1981) for nearly a year. My legislation calls on the House and Senate to pass a concurrent budget resolution and all regular appropriations bills before the beginning of each fiscal year. Failure to do so would result in the loss of pay until we take our jobs seriously and make these bills our legislative priority. The Congressional Budget Act of 1974 already requires Congress to pass a budget by April 15; my bill simply creates an enforcement mechanism to further encourage Members of Congress to do their constitutional duty.

I've spoken on the floor numerous times about No Budget, No Pay, but I believe now is the time to consider whether we are willing to make this promise to our constituents. The American people are increasingly losing confidence in Congress' ability to deliver solutions, and we must respond. For this reason, I urge you to include a roll call vote on the No Budget, No Pay Act in the unanimous consent agreement for consideration of the fiscal year 2013 budgets.

I'm pleased that ten of our colleagues have cosponsored this important effort, and others have expressed support for No Budget, No Pay on the Senate floor. I'm especially grateful to Senators Lieberman and Collins for holding a hearing that discussed No Budget, No Pay as a meaningful proposal that would help hold Congress accountable to the American people. This bipartisan, bicameral proposal is worthy of the Senate's time if we are serious about regaining the trust of the people we are supposed to represent.

I urge the Senate to vote on the No Budget, No Pay Act to show the American people we are interested not in politics, but in solutions. Our nation can literally no longer afford to survive on sound bites and press releases about the importance of budgeting. We need to engage in the serious business of budgeting for our nation's future, and the No Budget, No Pay Act is an important first step toward achieving this goal.

Sincerely,



DEAN HELLER
U.S. Senator

Cc: The Honorable Kent Conrad
The Honorable Jeff Sessions