

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 25, 2011

The Honorable Patty Murray
448 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeb Hensarling
129 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Murray and Representative Hensarling:

As co-chairs of the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction, you recently announced that you are crafting a set of rules to govern the Committee's operation. It has been reported that a website could be developed that would solicit public suggestions or opinions. While this is a step in the right direction, it will be difficult for the American public to make informed recommendations unless Committee meetings and conference calls are made in public and can be widely viewed or heard.

Since the creation of the Committee, I have heard from numerous Nevadans who have expressed concerns about the role and function of your Committee. As you know, I introduced the Budget Control Joint Committee Transparency Act (S. 1501), which would mandate that all meetings and hearings are conducted in a transparent manner through advance public notification, public attendance, and live television broadcasts. Since that time, many of our colleagues — both Democrat and Republican— have publicly expressed their support for transparency during Committee discussions.

In your most recent statement, you said "we encourage our colleagues to participate in active and useful dialogues across the aisle and among our respective caucuses as we continue to work through this process." There is no better way to make progress toward this goal other than to accept the bi-partisan call for all meetings, hearings, conference calls, and anytime a quorum of members are present to discuss Committee business to be open to the public and accessible for live television broadcast.

Committee members should conduct themselves in a transparent and accountable manner to the American public. As Members of Congress, we have a responsibility to be responsive to the public's needs. I appreciate your continued consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



U.S. Senator Dean Heller