



EVENT BRIEF

U.S. HOUSE REPUBLICANS PRESENT “A PLEDGE TO AMERICA”

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OVERVIEW

On Thursday, House Republicans presented their promise for a new governing agenda built on what they argue are the priorities, principles and founding values of the United States, calling it “A Pledge to America.” While the creation of jobs and economic recovery were front and center, the “Pledge” strikes a similar tone to the 1994 Republican “Contract With America.” Within the introductory content of the “Pledge,” proposals to stop “out-of-control spending and reduce the size of government; create a smaller, more accountable government; lower taxes; implement fiscal responsibility; protect life, American values, and the Constitution; and provide for a robust national defense” underline an election-year agenda. According to Congressman John Kline (R-MN), Ranking Member of the House Education and Labor Committee, “This agenda is an unequivocal statement about the Republican commitment to listening and leading. For too long, the concerns of the American people have taken a backseat to the whims of a power-hungry Washington. With the Pledge, we can begin to restore first principles now.”

SUMMARY

The first section of the “Pledge to America,” focuses on creating jobs and stimulating the economy. Republicans make a promise to permanently stop all tax increases as well as provide a tax deduction for small business owners—an amount equal to 20 percent of their business income. Also proposed is mandatory Congressional approval for any new federal regulation that has an annual cost of \$100 million or more. In addition, to ensure the constitutionality of new federal programs, Republicans would require each bill moving through Congress to “include a clause citing the specific constitutional authority upon which the bill is justified.” Finally, Republicans promise to repeal the current Internal Revenue Services (IRS) mandate requiring small businesses to report any purchases more than \$600. These proposals, according to House Republicans, will allow families to keep more of their money and provide small businesses with the stability they need to invest in the economy and grow the workforce.

Similarly, balancing the budget and paying down the national debt is also proposed. To do so, Republicans would rescind unspent American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds; block any extensions for additional ARRA funds; and reduce government spending to FY 2008 levels, which would save “at least \$100 billion in the first year alone.”

While the platform urges the reduction of governmental spending, few details are provided as to where these cuts would be made. Republicans do, however, propose a reduction to the Congressional budget and promise to cancel the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP). Regarding cuts to specific education programs, Republicans propose a “hard cap on new discretionary spending” and the end – or “sunset” – to certain federal programs. The document includes a pie chart of all federal agencies and the number of programs per agency that should be eliminated, including 173 programs at the Department of Education.

In addition, Republicans propose to allow any lawmaker to offer amendments that reduce federal spending, but each bill moving through Congress would be required to include a clause citing the specific constitutional authority. Republican Members promise to honor the original intent of the precepts in the Constitution, ones they argue “have been consistently ignored – particularly the Tenth Amendment,” which grants that all powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the states, are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people. The “Pledge” also requires an end to “must-pass” legislative practices, and instead, requires “major legislation to be advanced one issue at a time.”

Also central to “A Pledge to America” are proposals to repeal and replace the health care reform bill, the *Affordable Care Act*.

In the final two sections of the document, Republicans make promises to develop a national security plan – both at home and abroad – and also to serve “as a check and balance against any schemes that are inconsistent with the priorities and rights of the American people.” Specifically, Republicans pledge to ensure transparency and accountability in Congress and throughout the government; fight the growth of government and oppose new stimulus spending; fight efforts to fund the new health care law; and, oppose a national “cap and trade” energy tax while increasing access to domestic energy sources.

DEMOCRATIC REACTION

In response to yesterday’s events, Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s (D-CA) spokesman, Nadeam Elshami, issued a statement declaring, “Republicans want to return to the same failed economic policies that hurt millions of Americans and threatened our economy. Democrats will protect Social Security, give tax cuts to the middle class and help the middle class through our ‘Make it in America’ manufacturing strategy.” From the White House, Dan Pfeiffer, Communications Director, voiced a similar theme in a posting on the official White House blog yesterday evening stating, “This is the same agenda that caused the deepest recession since the Great Depression, costing 8 million jobs, wiping out trillions in family wealth and setting middle-class families back. Instead of a pledge to the American people, Congressional Republicans made a pledge to the big special interests to restore the same economic ideas that benefited them at the expense of middle-class families.”

CONCLUSION

“A Pledge to America” proposes to change the current metrics used to hold Congress accountable, with House Republicans promising to change how elected representatives represent

the views of the people, which they believe is currently measured in “bills passed, dollars spent, and programs created,” to a renewed drive for a smaller, less costly, and more accountable government. Largely absent from “A Pledge to America,” however, are plans for continued investment in high-quality education for young children or a promise to grow science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education or increasing technologies and fields of training for key industries like clean energy and manufacturing for rebuilding our roads, rails and runways.

The text of “A Pledge for America” can be found at <http://pledge.gop.gov>