

To the Constituents of Florida Congressional District 22,

As we are all aware, Standard and Poor's (S&P) recently downgraded the credit rating of the United States. This marks the first time in our nation's history that our credit rating has been downgraded.

For months, the rating agencies have warned that without significant changes to the fiscal direction of our country, a downgrade of our debt was likely. Yesterday's downgrade affects the "full faith and credit of the United States." It also affects America's stature as a beacon of freedom and liberty for the world and it could damage our ability to provide for our future defense and security.

In short, it materially hurts the futures of our children and grandchildren. Like you, I am deeply troubled by the direction the country is headed—this is why I decided in 2009 to run for Congress.

As a Member of the Republican Freshman class, we were elected to change the culture of our nation's capital. Washington has spent too much, borrowed too much, and created an atmosphere hostile to families and job creators.

Your votes last November for this large, committed Freshman class provided a dramatic change in leadership for the House of Representatives. Under new leadership, the "Peoples' House" has acted aggressively to change a broken political system in Washington. We have passed numerous pieces of legislation to cut spending, create jobs, provide for more American energy, repeal the President's Patient Affordable Care and Protection Act, and ease crushing regulatory burdens. The downgrading of our debt is a wakeup call that we need to continue to act quickly and more aggressively.

The House broke for the August recess on August 1st after passing the Budget Control Act. Unfortunately, S&P did not believe this legislation reduced our projected deficits enough and they elected to downgrade our credit rating.

It is important to note, however, that the House had previously passed landmark pieces of legislation, which would have prevented this downgrade – The Path to Prosperity Budget, and the Cut, Cap and Balance Act. Both of these pieces of legislation provided realistic paths to stop runaway Washington spending. Unfortunately, however, the Senate killed both pieces of legislation.

Worse yet, the Senate, under the leadership of Harry Reid, continued to squander precious taxpayer dollars on broken Washington programs, evidenced by the FAA shutdown over the past week, which happened because Senator Reid and some of his colleagues wanted to maintain wasteful spending for airline passengers at airports near their homes.

Under his leadership, the Senate has not passed a budget for over TWO years. Like you, I continue to say: Enough is Enough!

What should we do now? At this point, the House of Representatives is not in a position to act unilaterally. We have already passed good legislation, which has died in the United States Senate.

Nonetheless, there are a few options we could act upon under the following circumstances: (1) if the House is to be called back into session, (2) if the Senate will agree to come back into session and get serious about fixing our broken system, and (3) if the President will heed the wishes of the American people to fix our broken government.

For example, we must pursue the following actions:

1. The House and Senate could amend the Budget Control Act passed on August 1 to increase the cuts from \$2.4 trillion to over \$4 trillion

2. The Senate could adopt the House (Ryan) Budget

3. The Senate could adopt the House passed Cut, Cap and Balance Act
4. Both Houses could act quickly to enact reforms to address the massive amounts of waste identified in a recent GAO report, thus saving billions of taxpayer dollars
5. The Senate could adopt all of the House passed energy bills putting Americans back to work producing safe, clean, and efficient American energy from both conventional and alternative sources (and helping provide billions of dollars in additional federal revenues to help balance our budget)
6. The Senate could pass all of the House passed legislation to reform our regulatory system and remove the crushing regulatory overreach of unelected and unaccountable Washington bureaucrats
7. We could adopt the tax reforms included in the House (Ryan) Budget to simplify our tax code, remove loopholes, lower tax rates, improve competitiveness for American job creators, and develop a fairer, flatter tax system for all Americans
8. We could adopt the House designed reforms to Medicare and Medicaid to fix these programs before they go insolvent and bankrupt America in the process, and/or
9. We can immediately begin to sell excess federal property and raise billions of dollars in federal revenues

In addition, we need to reform our broken budget process which relies on inaccurate economic forecasting models, "baseline" budgeting, and provisions that allow one or more houses of Congress to ignore their responsibility to create annual budgets. We should also implement zero-based budgets, just like American families and job creators use.

I humbly request you contact Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and President Obama and demand they take action on the issues I have outlined.

I am standing ready, willing, and committed to finishing the work Americans sent my Freshman colleagues and me to the nation's capital to do. If this involves calling the United States Congress back into session now to do this, I am ready to go back to the Capitol, continue to roll up my sleeves, and take care of our problems.

While I cannot speak for the Leadership of the House or for my other House colleagues, I believe they stand ready to do this as well -- if the Senate and the President are ready to do so.

If you are like me, in light of the downgrade to our debt, you believe some or all of these actions should be taken immediately. You have had enough, I have had enough, and our fellow Americans have had enough!

Enough reckless Washington spending. Enough piling on debt. Enough empty promises.

It is time we stop the President's blank-check spending and take the necessary steps to force Washington to act responsibly and live within its means. If we fail to do so soon, to paraphrase Ronald Reagan, we will sentence our children and grandchildren into a thousand years of darkness.

We must make fundamental changes to our federal government so we can save the American Dream for our children and grandchildren. If we succeed, we can restore America to the vision Ronald Reagan believed in when he talked about "a shining city on a hill."

Steadfast and Loyal,

Congressman Allen B. West

