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Open Letter to Congress

August 4, 2011

We are writing on behalf of our organizations to express our concern about press reports that lobbyists and wealthy corporate interests are preparing to spend significant amounts of money to influence the work of the 12 members of United States Congress soon to be appointed to the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction.

Let us underscore that we believe America has a jobs crisis, not simply a deficit crisis. Millions of Americans are unemployed. Millions more are struggling to feed their families, pay medical bills, and keep a roof over their heads. Oil companies have just announced another quarter of profits and Wall Street firms continue to fight the implementation of common sense regulations that hold their greed in check. Wealthy CEOs and corporations pay far less than their fair share in taxes, while the rest of us fall farther behind.

Spending cuts under the Budget Control Act of 2011 will already force ordinary Americans to make further sacrifices while requiring nothing from large corporations or the super wealthy. Now, just a dozen members of the U.S. House and Senate will be in charge of proposing additional deficit-closing measures. These 12 members will come under intense pressure by wealthy corporate interests and their lobbyists representing big banks, defense contractors, and polluters to leave their special tax loopholes, unwarranted subsidies, and wasteful programs untouched. Ordinary Americans will be left vulnerable to shoulder even more of the burden.

Americans have lost faith and trust in Washington because they believe corporate CEOs and lobbyists call the shots. Rebuilding that faith will take actions, not words. That's why we urge every member appointed to this committee to take a clear two-part pledge to help restore trust and confidence in Washington. Specifically, we demand that from the time they are selected to the time their plan is voted on, appointees:

- 1) Cease all political fundraising for themselves, their party, or for other candidates; and
- 2) Provide full transparency on any meetings with outside groups or individuals regarding the committee's work, including meetings with lobbyists, corporate CEOs, or donors.

We are not proposing specific ways in which committee members adhere to these principles. We will review and evaluate them.

Simply put, at this time like no other, America needs leaders who stand up for regular people not wealthy corporate interests. When we read that lobbyists are “preparing [for the committee’s work] by writing 12 really large checks,” as was reported this week in *Politico*, we believe the potential further damage to the integrity of the Congress trumps any fundraising goal or possible rationale for secrecy.

The best way to insulate the committee is for appointed members to end all fundraising and to be fully transparent regarding with whom they meet while they serve on the committee.

Sincerely,

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