Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 9, 2013

The Honorable Barack Obama
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

There is little disagreement across the nation that Washington has a spending problem. With deficits over $1 trillion during each of the last four years and a national debt over $16 trillion and rising, our nation is in dire financial straits, and continuing down this path is not an option.

As you are undoubtedly aware, Article II, Section 3 of the U.S. Constitution provides that "[the President] shall from time to time give to the Congress Information of the State of the Union, and recommend to their Consideration such Measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient…." It is in the spirit of fulfilling your obligation under Article II, Section 3 that we write to you regarding your forthcoming State of the Union address.

We believe it is the responsibility of every president to be open and honest with the American people about our nation's financial situation (including the national debt and the future of Medicare and Social Security) – in the best of times and in the worst of times. As such, we respectfully request that during your forthcoming State of the Union address you set the precedent of incorporating specific information regarding the nation's financial situation in the annual address. We request that you deliver this information in simple and straightforward terms that set an example for your successors.

Specifically, we request that during your forthcoming State of the Union address, you clearly state the following data:

Regarding our national debt: (1) The national debt as of the day before the State of the Union address; (2) The change in national debt since the date of the previous year's State of the Union address; and (3) The per person share of the national debt (calculated by dividing the national debt by the U.S. population per the most recent Census data);

Regarding Medicare: (1) When the Medicare Trustees, according to their most recent annual report, expect the Medicare Trust Fund to be exhausted; and,

Regarding Social Security: (1) When the Social Security Trustees, according to their most recent annual report, expect the Social Security Trust Fund to be exhausted.

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While we may not agree on the ways to address these problems, the start of a discussion begins with acknowledging they exist. Further, it is imperative that every person in America be provided the tools to have a discussion about the financial health of the nation and what it means for them. The American people deserve nothing less than the truth and the facts. Your administration pledged to be transparent and honest with America, and we believe providing this information to the American public in this forum is an ideal way to fulfill that pledge.

Respectfully,

Tim Griffin
Member of Congress

Cory Gardner
Member of Congress