

I hope that you've all had a pleasant New Year thus far. 2013 is just a few weeks old, and yet we've already seen the same sort of brinksmanship, partisan politics, and backroom deals in Washington that have unfortunately come to define this government in recent years. The fiscal cliff deal that passed on January 1 was negotiated late at night by just a few individuals – hardly the way to govern a nation of more than three hundred million people. While I have long supported lower taxes on Americans and also advocated against the looming defense cuts known as sequestration, I could not support a bill that simply kicks the can down the road and sets up yet another contentious debate over our nation's future in just a couple of months, thereby extending the uncertainty that is inhibiting our nation's job creators. This whole scene was Washington at its worst – a debate being conducted over television sound bytes and secretive deals, rather than with transparent, rational discussions and exchanges of ideas.

The atmosphere in Washington lately has been truly frustrating, and it's no wonder that Americans hold Congress in such low regard. However, the New Year can be a time of opportunity, and it is my hope that our nation's elected officials will take advantage of this chance to lay out a more realistic and responsible long-term path toward fiscal sustainability. And this sense of rejuvenation doesn't have to apply only to issues surrounding the fiscal cliff. Congress will address many important issues over the coming year, and it is critical that these matters be considered in terms of what will help our nation going forward into the future. [I was sworn in as a new member of the 113th Congress](#) on January 4, and my granddaughter Morgan joined me for the occasion. Her presence here in the Capitol Building reminded me just how critical each decision is. The actions of today's Congress will undoubtedly affect Morgan and the rest of her generation, and I am dedicated to ensuring that all of our children and grandchildren are able to experience even better opportunities than my generation had.

As I address the significant issues facing our nation during 2013, I hope that you will all continue to keep in touch. Whether you're posting comments on Facebook, tweeting about particular bills that interest you, calling my office to convey your thoughts, or simply reading this post each week, your interaction and ideas are always valuable to me as I serve the First District. Thank you for your participation in 2012, and please continue to engage as 2013 continues.