

Congress Is Back in Session Today; Here's What We're Working On

The House of Representatives has accomplished a lot this year. We have passed 330 pieces of legislation already for important goals, such as to help American workers, to take care of our veterans, and to improve our energy security.

It is a strong start, but we need to keep that momentum going through the remainder of the year. As a Congress, and as a country, we face some considerable challenges.

This fall, Congress will vote to either approve or disapprove the president's executive agreement with the Islamic Republic of Iran. The agreement, or plan of action, would lift \$150 billion in sanctions on Iran and remove the ban on arms trade with Iran in exchange for Iran reducing its stockpile of nuclear material for a decade. Iran is the world's top state sponsor of terrorism, and an influx of money nearly half of the size of its entire economy will empower and embolden them. For thirty six years they have demonstrated what they want to do, and that is terrorize anyone who doesn't share their twisted theology. Two-thirds of both Chambers of Congress will be required to stop the agreement from taking effect. I will be joining over 218 fellow members of Congress who have already committed to do so in voting to stop this massive infusion of money to the world's most prolific state supporter of terror.

The House will continue to investigate Planned Parenthood, and to consider whether they are truly deserving of dollars taken from hardworking taxpayers, dollars that could be spent on countless other priorities such as healthcare, roads and bridges, or our veterans. The House Energy and Commerce Committee, on which I serve, along with the Judiciary Committee and Oversight and Government Reform Committee, is

looking into whether or not abortion providers are profiting off of the sale of the body parts of unborn babies. We also want to find out whether abortionists are changing their procedures—endangering women—in order to salvage as many of the child's body parts as possible. Taxpayer money is sacred, and Congress ought to use it with discretion and consideration. If an organization receiving one million taxpayer dollars a day like Planned Parenthood is breaking the law, then Congress needs to know it.

Congress must also decide whether to raise the debt ceiling even higher than it already is. Right now, the legal limit on the federal government's borrowing is \$18.4 trillion, or about 36 times size of the economy of Pennsylvania. This is the highest quantity of debt in the history of the world. But the federal government spends so much money that it is not enough: it still needs to keep borrowing nearly half a trillion dollars per year indefinitely. In fact, this borrowing rate is expected to actually increase dramatically in the near future.

Therefore, Congress needs to decide: should we change nothing, and continue borrowing nearly half a trillion dollars per year? Or do we have enough debt? It is only reasonable to ask, when borrowing any amount of money, but especially when borrowing trillions of dollars, whether or not we can actually repay it. Unconditional borrowing doesn't make sense for individuals, for companies, or for countries, least of all the country with the largest economy on earth. There is no one big enough that they could bail out the United States.

Congress will vote to make reforms to fund the federal contribution to our highway system. The formula in law right now is inadequate to pay for all of our federal highway projects. As technology has improved, cars and trucks use gas more efficiently than ever before. As such, funding from gas taxes doesn't go as far as it used to. Congress must determine a better way of paying for our roads and bridges, and do so soon.

Congress will receive Pope Francis before his visit to Philadelphia, where he will speak at the World Meeting of

Families. As that is his destination, I hope that he will talk about how we as legislators can promote values that protect the irreplaceable institution of the family. I also hope that he will provide moral encouragement to Congress on these major tasks ahead of us, and remind us to keep the priceless value of every human being at the center of our decision-making.

This fall will be a time of action for Congress. It is a time for citizens to stay informed, and to stay involved. I know that if we work together, we can continue our momentum, and make wise, prudent decisions about these pressing questions. And I am confident that we will.