

Transitions: The 112th Congress of the United States will be sworn into office on January 5th, 2011. We Republicans will be back in the majority after 4 years of the Pelosi-controlled House.

When the majority shifts, there will be opportunity to change much. Obviously, leaders and offices and people will shift around, but, since in our Constitution there are coequal parts of government with no superior branch of government, the House makes up its own rules. Those rules are newly approved by each congress and they determine how the House will be run. Traditionally, many of those rules do not change from congress to congress because they have been established by over 200 years of precedent, and they are the accepted way to engage in civil, but vigorous debate on the floor and in committees.

I have been appointed by soon-to-be-speaker John Boehner to the 22 member Transition Team, which is tasked with drafting those new rules, as well as other procedures on how we will run the place.

I hope we run it very, very differently than either Speaker Pelosi has or than we did prior to 2007.

I, obviously, do not agree with Pelosi's policy choices over the last 4 years. That is hardly a news flash. But, I believe that there is some bipartisan and objective agreement that the House was run poorly. Pelosi engaged in top-down and top-heavy management with little delegation. For example, the committees did little actual work. Bills were crafted by a select few in a back room, and then presented to the Congress, both Republicans and Democrats, as a fait accompli with no opportunity for amendment. Time was very inefficiently used, as we spent a lot of time in DC not doing very much and were given little time to hear from constituents. Huge bills with no time for anyone to read them resulted in a lot of unintended consequences. Many smaller bills with bipartisan support were not allowed to come to the floor, as all the oxygen in the entire town was sucked up by the health care monstrosity and other huge proposals. None of these smaller bills will, by themselves, save the Republic. But, in the aggregate, they can remove barriers to growth and clarify things in numerous areas of the economy that will spur job creation. Currently, the rules in the House are skewed to favor spending more money. We need to correct them to favor saving taxpayer's money.

We need to fix all of this, and we will. Exactly how, though, will take several weeks to determine, as we craft proposals and solicit input from Republicans, Democrats and staff members. We should have it all figured out by early to mid-December.

I hope we are bold with changing how we run the place. I hope we get rid of earmarks completely, and create a culture of efficiency and less spending. I hope we empower committees, where the real detail work should get done, to first, do that work independent of the Speaker, and second, bring bills to the floor and let members amend them and then take a vote. If the bill passes, then it passes, and if it fails, it fails. I hope our time in DC is more productive, and I hope that we are able to spend more time in our districts, where we will be able to hear from and be influenced by our constituents and less by the beltway.

And, if we decide to change something and find that it doesn't work, I hope we have the courage to admit that we made a mistake and change it. There will be somewhere north of 81 new Republican freshman in the 112th Congress. That's over 1/3 of all the Republicans. That's huge. I hope we engage them fully in all that we do.

Lame Duck: The so-called "lame duck" session begins Monday. I have "seen this movie" before in the lame duck session of 2006, when the winners and losers were reversed. Lame ducks are often not very productive, as the Senate still needs 60 votes to pass something and a lot of the members who lost their seats in the new minority are not in a very good mood. You are all aware that the tax cuts expire at the end of the year. But, a lot of other stuff expires or is on deadline. The death tax will go up to its 1999 level, the Alternative Minimum Tax will grab and increase taxes on another 21 million taxpayers, many credits will expire, doctors will be paid less by Medicare, there still is no budget or appropriations bills for the current fiscal year, the unemployment insurance extensions expire, etc. etc. etc. The Democrats kicked a lot of these cans down the road in September to avoid an unpopular vote before the election. That did not work to save their majority. Much of the above will likely just get kicked past the first of the year, and the new congress, a very different congress, will deal with it.

I will keep you posted.

California: There are now many readers of this missive from all across the country. So, I do not want to get too California-centric on you, but you may know that I am a 4th generation Californian and I feel very passionately about this state. I love its natural beauty and weather, of course. Who wouldn't? But, I also love the spirit of discovery, entrepreneurship and adventure that exists here. It is a culture that is accepting of new things.

But, the election results here at home, and in fact, in all 4 Pacific states (CA,OR,WA,HI) were disappointing. It's like the national trend crashed and burned somewhere in the Rockies. People in the other 46 states elected over 60 new Republicans to the House and 6 to the Senate. But, in these 4 states, only 1 net new Republican was elected to the House and none in the Senate. Democrats actually gained seats in the California legislature, while losing the majority in 19 other state legislatures.

There are a lot of reasons, given California's way above average unemployment and huge debt and deficit problems, to be pessimistic on the West Coast. We just re-elected the people who are driving up spending and taxes and driving out jobs. But, at least the Democrats now are in complete control, and will have no one but themselves to blame if California continues to lag behind the rest of the country in so many critical areas.

And then, maybe the message will finally get through. But, don't give up on California. Not yet. There's too much good here that offsets a bad government. I'll have more to say about this in the months ahead.

Until next week, I remain respectfully,

Congressman John Campbell
Member of Congress