

## November 1, 2011 CNN American Morning Transcript

**Host:** That's the job of the high profile Super Committee, six Republicans and six Democrats. They have 23 days to come up with a way to reduce the deficit by \$1.5 trillion. Yes, that's a big task, and this morning, the Committee is urged to go big by a group of bipartisan House members.

Joining me now, Democratic Congressman Jim Cooper of Tennessee and Republican Congressman Reid Ribble from Wisconsin. Welcome, gentlemen.

**Cooper:** Good morning, Carol.

**Ribble:** Good morning, Carol.

**Host:** Good morning. Thank you for being here. It is nice to see a Republican and Democrat together and talking. So you have written a letter, you have about 100 Members signed up in support of this letter. So tell us what the 100 lawmakers have agreed to and give us an idea how many Democrats and how many Republicans you've signed up, Representative Cooper.

**Cooper:** We're asking the Super Committee to be brave, to do the right thing for America. If they do that, we've got their backs. Basically we want everything on the table.

**Host:** You say be brave. So Representative Ribble, what does that mean, be brave, have courage?

**Ribble:** I think for us, we want the Super Committee to feel empowered to go much larger than 1.5 trillion. If we look at \$1.5 trillion in the course of a decade, that's only reducing spending about 2.7%. If they could go to 4 trillion, now we are at 9.5% and we're encouraging them to do so and lead with courage.

**Host:** Congressmen, the biggest hurdles are retirement reform and taxes. Are Republicans in favor of some tax increases? Are Democrats in favor of reforms to entitlements?

**Ribble:** I'll take it on the Republican side, Carol. I think what we're looking for is to encourage the committee to look at three things.

We want whatever they come out with to be fair, to have sound policy, and to recognize the economic realities of what we are facing today. Tax rates don't correlate much to what actual revenue is, but if we would remove some of the subsidies and tax give-a-ways, we would have the money to reduce rates and spur economic growth which would increase revenue.

**Host:** Would that satisfy things on this Super Committee do you think? I mean, the Republicans especially?

**Ribble:** I think that that's a place to start. And that's the whole purpose of the letter, to show them there is some bipartisan support for them to look at this in a much bigger, long term approach.

**Host:** So you know, you're sending this letter, and there are 100 lawmakers that signed on, but the Super Committee is really acting on its own so you are sort of outside the mix. How much clout will the letter really have?

**Cooper:** I think you'll see it has a great influence because the Super Committee wants to know whatever they recommend and it is coming out November 23rd that it will be able to pass Congress. We have to vote by December 23rd, by Christmas. One hundred signatures on the letter means it has a lot of momentum. I think that will encourage the Super Committee to do the right thing.

**Host:** Congressman Ribble, I want to ask you about the approval rating of congress.

**Ribble:** Yeah.

**Host:** There was a new *The New York Times* poll down to 9%. That means only your relatives and friends pretty much support you guys. What does that feel like?

**Ribble:** Well, I mean, as a new freshman Member, I expected some of this to happen, but I tell you, the American people have a right to be cynical. I came into the job cynical back in January. Hasn't been a lot I've seen today to make me less cynical. However, here's a case where Congressman Cooper and I have become friends. We're a little more pragmatic. We want to see the future better for our children and grandchildren, and you know, we all have to lay down our swords, stop poking each other in the eye, try to get something done here. It is time we start to walk the walk, talk the talk. That's just the reality of it.

**Host:** That sounds like such a simple thing to do. It is like sit down, talk it out, and compromise. So Congressman Cooper, why can't Congress do that?

**Cooper:** Well, you're right, Carol, we should be able to do it, it's for the good of the country. We should be able to come together and compromise. Democrats often times want to completely protect all entitlement programs forever, Republicans don't want to hear the "t" word about taxes. There has to be a solution somewhere in the middle to reduce some debt so we have a stronger financial future for we can do this.

**Host:** Congressman Ribble, we hear it all the time. Hear it from lawmakers like you that yes, compromise is possible and yes, we should be doing these things, but we don't see it in action.

**Ribble:** Well, we see it sometimes in action, and we see it with this letter that's being written. Maybe the wisdom of the Super Committee is that you're doing something in a bicameral way and doing some of it bipartisan. If you address the big drivers of debt, defense spending, Medicare, Social Security, chances are better if we step together into the pond and say we'll do it together. What that will do is it will force the political parties and their committees to not be able to use it as a weapon against each other. We have to take those weapons away, and we have to be able to work together. Sometimes I feel like I'm in a classroom of six-year-olds.

**Host:** I think many Americans would probably agree with you.

**Ribble:** They would.

**Host:** I hope your letter makes a difference. The Super Committee doesn't have much time to come up with whatever plan they're going to come up with. Representatives Cooper and Ribble, thank you for joining us. We appreciate it.

**Christine Romans, Co-Anchor:** If you cut \$1.2 trillion or \$1.5 trillion out of the deficit, you're still running up the national debt. That doesn't start to eat at the national debt. That's where the go big strategy is coming from - given what they have to do which is politically dangerous and difficult, it still isn't enough.