

A JOBS SUPERCONGRESS

It's rather pathetic that this idea seems so remarkable.

Rep. John Larson (Conn.), chairman of the Democratic Caucus, wants to amend the recently passed debt-limit package to establish a joint select committee on job creation to operate alongside the already mandated Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction.

In a "Dear Colleague" letter sent to House members earlier in the week, Larson argued that the nation's jobs crisis is only exacerbating its long-term fiscal problems and therefore demands Congress's immediate attention. "This high unemployment poses a very real short-term fiscal crisis, because it drains the federal coffers through increased government spending and reduced tax revenues," Larson wrote in the Aug. 8 letter.

"Families are being forced out of their homes, children are being forced to forgo higher education, the elderly are being forced to retire early without nearly enough saved to cover their long-term costs," he said. "If not addressed, I believe the social costs of unemployment will dramatically damage the United States' status in the world and prevent us from emerging from this recession."

And in the Senate, a portion of Democrats are making a similar argument.

Dear Leader McConnell:

Given that the single best deficit reduction strategy is economic growth, we urge you to ensure that your appointments to the new joint select committee ("JSC") created by the debt

limit bill are committed to a policy of job creation.

The recent spate of discouraging economic news underscores the need to make employment the top priority of our government. For families across the country, the biggest economic problem is high unemployment. As you know, the lack of jobs and anemic growth rate of the economy are not only enormous problems in their own right, causing great pain for millions of Americans, they are a major component of our deficit. Indeed, the loss of revenue resulting from the recession accounts for nearly \$4 trillion of the projected deficits over the next 10 years.

At the same time, jobless workers put additional strain on our critical social safety net programs. As more and more Americans rely on unemployment benefits, food stamps and Medicaid, our deficits go up. Getting those individuals back to work not only allows them to be self-sufficient, it reduces federal government spending.

It is therefore appropriate and important that the JSC explicitly embrace job creation as a part of its mission. Targeted investments in economic growth and job creation can complement and even enhance long-term deficit reduction efforts and should be a priority that the JSC embraces. Indeed, failure to make such investments could have a serious negative impact on our fiscal situation.

But, as Bob Brigham observes, only 23 Senators signed this letter. How have we gotten to the point where not even a majority of Senate Democrats understand that the one of the best ways to fix the deficit is to fix the jobs crisis (of course, the absolutely best way to

fix the deficit is to enact single payer health care, and that's not going to happen either).