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Dear Republican Colléague:

I am writing you today to announce my intention to seek the position of Republican Leader for the 111th Congress and, more importantly, to seek your counsel and support.

At the outset, let me say I consider John Boehner a good man – one of honor and integrity – I have been proud to vote for him on the last two occasions.

However, I am embarking on this effort because I think our Party is in trouble. If we don't admit our difficulties and address them aggressively, we not only run the risk of becoming a permanent Congressional Minority but we will do a disservice to our nation.

Let us be clear. For the second general election in a row, the American people have sent us a strong message. How we respond to their rebuke will indicate to them whether or not we value their opinions. If we hope to regain their trust, our response cannot be business as usual. We cannot succumb to the tyranny of some artificial timeline. We must not forsake the importance of this moment. If we choose by inaction to ignore the real challenges we face, then paraphrasing President Reagan, we deserve to be relegated to the trash heap of history.

In the last week and a half I have had conversations with many of our colleagues as well as various people in our base – outside the Congress, representing the grass roots – and there is one constant refrain: “Do the Republicans in Congress really understand the magnitude of what has happened?” Our actions next week will begin to answer that question.

If we follow the “regular order” of the Conference Organizing Meetings, we will have failed our first test – for it will signal that we have understood nothing about the current political climate.

If we follow the “regular order” of the Conference Organizing Meetings, we will spend more time on our office location and room selection process than we will debating where we as a Party are and where we are going.

If we follow the “regular order” of the Conference Organizing Meetings, we will not engage in a full-throated debate about who and what we are as a Party until after we have selected our new leadership team.

If we are to regain the confidence of the American people it is essential that we demonstrate the reorganization of our leadership team is part of a larger introspective process driven by a commitment to ideas. The American people must once again perceive – and it must be a fact – that we seek to govern as a means to this end, rather than an end in itself.

So how do we do this?

I propose that we suspend the “regular order” of the Conference Organizing Meetings and begin with a three hour closed door Conference meeting devoted solely to the question of the election of our

Republican Leader. As many candidates as may announce should be given ten to fifteen minutes to make a presentation, followed by a period of time to question and debate one another, and concluded by two hour period where all members of the Conference can engage in dialogue, debate and questioning of the candidates.

It has been suggested that our last two elections have been fought in “idea free zones”. The base of our Republican Party is telling us that we need to rediscover our conservative principles and the language which makes our message understandable to those we used to call “Reagan Democrats” (although they fly under different colors today). The House Republican Conference in our inaugural or organizing meetings must provide a member friendly forum providing the rank and file with an effective opportunity for engaging our leadership before they are chosen.

This “modest proposal” rests on two propositions:

First, what we demand of the Democrats – that they allow for vigorous, free and open debate on the House Floor and in Committees – we first demand of ourselves.

Second, for the good of our Country and our Party, we intend once again to be the Party of ideas – grounded in the principles of liberty and responsibility.

Three years ago, on the occasion of an unusually timed election for our Republican Leader, I penned the following words for National Review:

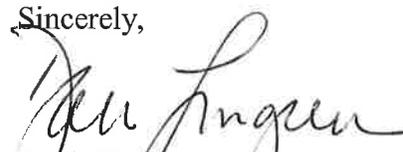
“The choice between several qualified candidates for (Republican) leader will have a significant impact on the agenda of Congress in the months and years to come. It is the process by which our leadership is elected, however, that will have the largest impact on the American people. We are not choosing a class president or the grand marshal at the Rose Bowl Parade. The election of the ... leadership should not, and cannot, be a popularity contest determined before the debate has begun.

“The coronation of a (Republican) leader will not serve the best interests of the party, the Congress, or the public. We owe them more than empty rhetoric, predetermined support and sterilized nomination speeches. We owe them the benefits of an open debate on the merits of each candidate and their vision for the future. We owe them a thorough and thoughtful review of our current leadership and a commitment to act in the best interest of the country. The validity of our choice and the transparency of the process will be the first step toward real reform.”

I believed those words when I wrote them and voted for John Boehner then and I believe them now.

I would be honored if you would join me in this effort to lead our Republican Party back to Majority status.

Sincerely,



Daniel E. Lungren
Member of Congress