Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 8, 2010

Dear Colleague:

I am pleased to release the 2011 congressional calendar for the U.S. House of Representatives. The calendar can be accessed today at RepublicanWhip.house.gov and starting January 5, 2011, at MajorityLeader.gov.

This year's calendar is the result of substantial input gained by the Republican Transition Team from members of both the House Republican Conference and the House Democratic Caucus, and from many outside reformers. In total, it contains 123 days and 32 weeks of session. While the number of days in session is consistent with first sessions in years past, the number of weeks in session represents an eleven percent drop, resulting in less travel for Members and potential savings to the Member's Representational Allowance (MRA).

Most importantly, the 2011 calendar was drafted with the following goals in mind:

1) **Create Certainty** for Members, families, staff, and the public;
2) **Increase Efficiency and Productivity** in the legislative process;
3) **Protect Committee Time** and conduct meaningful oversight; and
4) **Listen to Constituents** and reflect the American people's will.

Above all else, the House calendar will enable Members to focus on the country's most pressing concerns: the economy and jobs, reducing spending and limiting the size of government, and making Congress more transparent and accountable.

Create Certainty

Over the past decade, the House's schedule has fluctuated on a week-to-week basis. Rarely do Members know when last votes will be scheduled for the day or week. As a result, meetings are often missed, congressional families are disappointed, and constituent events are left in limbo.

It is my intention to start floor votes no sooner than 1:00 p.m. and to regularly end voting on the floor no later than 7:00 p.m. each evening. When necessary, the House may continue to debate and consider legislation after 7:00 p.m., but votes will not be held past that point. As a result, Members will be able to plan their days with more certainty.

In addition, I intend to begin votes at 6:30 p.m. on the first day of each week and end votes at 3:00 p.m. on the last day of each week. (Votes on the last day may be necessary prior to 1:00 p.m.) All Members will have the ability to return home to their district by Thursday or Friday evening each week, however, the last day of the week will no longer be treated in a perfunctory manner.

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Including this year, the House has not adjourned until December for eight straight years. Therefore, the House's target adjournment has been moved from the end of the fiscal year to Thursday, December 8, in order to better reflect the anticipated workload of the Congress. This will allow Members to plan their fall and early winter schedules now. If we are able to adjourn before December 8, it will be the first time in fourteen years that the House has finished prior to its target adjournment date.

Increase Efficiency and Productivity

From input gained during the transition process, Members unanimously agreed that a Tuesday-through-Thursday schedule can create an inefficient, unproductive, and frenetic legislative body. The risks of such a schedule are bills rushed to the floor; Members voting on legislation without the benefit of time for review; and committees and the deliberative process becoming after-thoughts.

During the 110th Congress, for example, the House considered 2,185 bills on the floor, 70% of which were debated on the suspension calendar. This past year, during the 111th Congress, more than half of all suspension bills named a post office or building, congratulated an individual or team, or supported the designation of a particular day, week, or month. We can do better to reflect the will of the taxpayers who have elected us.

The goal for this Congress is to stress quality over quantity in terms of the flow of legislation to the House floor. I intend to lengthen the time for consideration of bills in order to improve quality and deliver results. Gone are congratulatory resolutions. Post office namings will be handled on a less frequent basis. In addition, legislation will be made available both three days prior to a committee mark-up and three days prior to floor consideration. Taken together, these reforms will allow more time for quality consideration while increasing the House's efficiency and guaranteeing the public's right to know.

Lastly, with the exception of January, the House will utilize four- and five-day work weeks. Members and staff should quickly gain an ability to better focus their time with less conflicts.

Protect Committee Time

Since the late 1970s and early 1980s, committee oversight hearings have declined by roughly 80 percent. If we are to reflect the commitment we have made to the voters who elected us, we must reverse this trend.

During the 112th Congress, it is my intention to create protected committee time each morning we are in session. Committee meetings will commence at 9:00 a.m. or 10:00 a.m. On the first day of each week, committees will be able to meet – uninterrupted – prior to 6:30 p.m. or after 7:00 p.m. During the middle two days of each week, committees will be protected from floor votes until 1:00 p.m. and after 7:00 p.m. Every effort will be made on a last day of the week to limit the number of floor votes from interrupting committee action. And we will hold *ourselves* accountable in conducting meaningful and deliberative work by posting committee votes online.

Listen to Constituents

American voters sent us a resounding message in November – Washington is out of touch with their concerns and priorities. Through much deliberation during the transition process, Members indicated the need to return home to listen to their constituents on a regular basis.

Accordingly, the schedule will reflect a guaranteed five-day constituent work week at least once each month for Members to visit with employers, employees, seniors, veterans, and other constituent groups Monday through Friday in their district, rather than just on the weekends. This time will be used to listen to constituents, solicit their input, and gain their feedback.

The results of these reforms should be a U.S. House of Representatives that more accurately reflects the Founders' intent during the 112th Congress – that is, "direct and constant control by the citizens" (Thomas Jefferson, 1816).

I am ready to roll up my sleeves and get down to work with each of you on behalf of the American people. Please do not hesitate to contact me or my office if you have any questions.

Happy Holidays!

Sincerely,

Eric Cantor
Majority Leader-elect