

"The outcomes of elections are rarely as meaningful to the future of the nation as the election of 2010. But now, in 2011, a new Congress has been sworn in, and it is time for us to get to work.

In my last message, I outlined some of the priorities of the new Congress. Reforming the health care law, containment of the cap-and-trade environmental regulations, reductions in federal spending and a new dawn of government accountability are all at the top of the list.

But the most important role of the new Congress, specifically the new U.S. House of Representatives, will be to act as a check and a balance on the Obama Administration.

In the last two years, only one oversight hearing has been conducted which subpoenaed documents from the Obama Administration. It's simply not acceptable for our federal government to be allowed to operate behind a closed curtain: private negotiations with prescription drug giants and insurance conglomerates on the health care law, whispered conversations with the biggest financial firms on the face of the earth on banking reform, and backroom deals to allow federal agencies to implement liberal policies that not even the Democratic majority in Congress could muster the votes to pass.

If the new U.S. House of Representatives never passes a single bill, our most important work can still be attained - to stop the erosion of transparency and burgeoning power of the Executive Branch of federal government.

We will accomplish this in many ways, but primarily by standing fast in the face of pressure. The cuts proposed by this Congress will not be popular with some Americans. Undoubtedly, many federal programs will be subjected to cuts that will allow others to continue. Still more reductions in spending will be necessary to prevent the unprecedented borrowing that has created the greatest national debt in the history of the world.

And these proposals will be made in the light of day, not the dead of night. We'll televise more congressional hearings. We'll call more witnesses from the Administration to defend the spending of their agencies. We'll ask for more ideas to save taxpayers money for our true national priorities. And we will have a robust discussion of what those priorities are today, and what they should be in order to secure the future prosperity of our nation.

But the ultimate goal, the ends of all these means, will be to chart a new course for our nation - one that doesn't rely on massive amounts of spending and slick wheeling-and-dealing, but instead on an honest, forthright agenda that puts individual rights, American competitiveness, and the defense of our freedoms at the fore.

I know these are lofty aims, but I think we are starting in the right place. When your house is on fire, you have to put the fire out before you can rebuild. As a check and a balance, this Congress can lay the foundation for the important work to come."

