

MITCH McCONNELL  
KENTUCKY



**United States Senate**  
OFFICE OF THE REPUBLICAN LEADER  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

October 4, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500-0005

Dear President Biden:

For many years, our working relationship has been defined not only by our strong disagreements, but also by mutual transparency and respectful candor. I write in that spirit to express concern that our nation is sleepwalking toward significant and avoidable danger because of confusion and inaction from the Speaker of the House and the Senate Democratic Leader concerning basic governing duties.

Since mid-July, Republicans have clearly stated that Democrats will need to raise the debt limit on their own. All year, your party has chosen to pursue staggering, “*transformational*” spending through unprecedented use of the party-line reconciliation process. Democrats inherited bipartisan trends from COVID relief to appropriations but have chosen to govern alone.. Even now, with Americans already facing painful inflation, Democrats are preparing another staggering taxing and spending spree without any Republican input or support.

Bipartisanship is not a light switch that Speaker Pelosi and Leader Schumer may flip on to borrow money and flip off to spend it. Republicans’ position is simple. We have no list of demands. For two and a half months, we have simply warned that since your party wishes to govern alone, it must handle the debt limit alone as well.

As you and I know from shared Senate experience, this is not unusual. The debt limit is often a partisan vote during times of unified government. In 2003, 2004, and 2006, Mr. President, you joined Senate Democrats in opposing debt limit increases and made Republicans do it ourselves. You explained on the Senate floor that your ‘*no*’ votes did not mean you wanted the majority to let the country default, but rather that the President’s party had to take responsibility for a policy agenda which you opposed. Your view then is our view now.

There is one difference between then and now: Leader Schumer requested and won new powers to repeatedly reuse the fast-track, party-line reconciliation process. As a result, Senate Democrats do not need Republican cooperation in any shape or form to do their job. Democrats do not need our consent to set a vote at 51 instead of 60. Nonpartisan experts confirm that Senate Democrats have every necessary tool to pass a standalone debt limit increase through reconciliation and enough time to do it before late October. As I have warned for months, this is the path they will need to take.

Congressional Democrats have wasted weeks complaining that this relatively brief process would inconvenience their floor schedules. Mr. President, as you know as a Senate veteran, that is not an excuse; it is just a complaint. Republicans will not build Speaker Pelosi and Leader Schumer a shortcut around procedural hurdles they can clear on their own so they have a more convenient path to jam us with a partisan taxing and spending spree.

Mr. President, I have relayed this reality to your Democratic lieutenants for two and a half months. My concern for our country is that Leader Schumer and Speaker Pelosi have done nothing. Either the Democratic leaders simply cannot govern or they would rather play chicken with the U.S. economy than accept reality.

Your Democratic majorities have no plan of their own to avoid default. On Thursday, we narrowly avoided a shutdown by a few hours because Senate Democrats wasted weeks on theatrics before accepting reality. The American people cannot afford the same rudderless drift toward danger with respect to the full faith and credit of our nation.

Mr. President, I respectfully submit that it is time for you to engage directly with congressional Democrats on this matter. Your lieutenants in Congress must understand that you do not want your unified Democratic government to sleepwalk toward an avoidable catastrophe when they have had nearly three months' notice to do their job.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mitch McConnell", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

MITCH McCONNELL  
SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER