



## COEUR D'ALENE TRIBE

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It's time to buckle down and address one of the biggest budget issues this country has faced in decades, the "fiscal cliff" – a series of expiring tax cuts and automatic spending cuts that are set to go into effect in January 2013 unless Congress acts.

Both parties appear to be set in their ways. The "R's" want to preserve tax cuts for everyone, and cut spending to nearly all government programs. Across the aisle, the "D's" want to preserve tax cuts for all but the most wealthy and combine those tax cut expirations with smaller cuts to government programs. As with most difficult issues, most of us know the solution can be found somewhere in the middle.

One common misconception people have is that Indians don't pay taxes, so you may be asking yourself, "Why does Chief or the Tribe care about taxes or the fiscal cliff?" The truth is that individual Indians and their businesses are subject to federal income taxes just like every other American and American business. Every year, I have to file my income taxes and pay the IRS, just as you do. As one of the largest employers in the Inland Northwest, our tribal operations pay wages and payroll taxes just like every other employer. And the nearly 2,000 employees who work for us pay millions of dollars in state and federal income taxes each year.

Believe it or not, the State of Idaho relies on the federal government to fund approximately forty percent of its \$6.9 billion budget. The Coeur d'Alene Tribe's budget is significantly smaller than the state's budget, but the percentage of federal funding in our budget is similar to percentage of federal funding included in the State budget, only on a much smaller scale. The Tribe receives partial funding to help us operate some of our essential government services, including tribal health care and education. Federal funding for such tribal programs was agreed to by the government through treaties and agreements in exchange for relinquishing title to land and resources the Tribe once owned.

If our leaders fail to find compromise and send this country off the proverbial cliff, we will all see our taxes increase, our economy worsen, and nearly all federal, state and tribal programs will be affected by deep budget cuts. And while budget cuts can sometimes help to maximize efficiencies, they often mean layoffs. The last thing our economy needs right now is a massive round of layoffs by Idaho's largest employers due to budget cuts for federal and state agencies.

But there is good news. Through compromise, Congress can choose to protect jobs and still address the deficit problems. Earlier this year, the Senate passed a bill that will protect 98% of Americans and 97% of small businesses from tax increases with far less severe cuts to government programs. It strikes a balance of measured cost cuts and limited revenue increases by allowing certain tax rates to be restored to the Clinton-era rates for only the highest income earners. The House must take similar action to protect our economy.

Our leaders must move past this repugnant and futile era of partisan politics for the sake of our economy and our country. The American people want action, not politics as usual. We ask Congress to choose compromise over political agendas. Weary of rhetoric, we want decisions and consensus, not partisanship and gridlock. Now is the time when our elected officials must step up and be leaders.

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