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## **Prepared Remarks of TCS president Ryan Alexander for Tele-Press Conference on the 2012 Elections, the “Fiscal Cliff,” and the Lame Duck**

Thanks everyone for joining us today. As you know I’m Ryan Alexander, president of Taxpayers for Common Sense. And we’re here today to talk about what we’ve learned from this election, the lame duck, and what Congress should and shouldn’t do..

We’ve just re-elected the same basic teams to solve the problem that we’ve been faced with the last several years. The President can rightly claim that his victory indicates that Americans are willing to see some taxes raised. The Speaker can rightly claim that the re-election of a Republican majority indicates Americans want some limits on taxes.

And as we listen to what various political leaders have been saying in the last few days, they all have some merit, but they don’t all agree with each other. We agree with Speaker Boehner that the lame duck shouldn’t solve all the problems. We don’t want a body that has almost 20 percent of its members not in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress making decisions for the country. We agree with Majority Leader Reid that we’ve been kicking the can down the road too long. But again, this is a lame duck, these are serious problems, we have to kick the can down the road one last time for a short period. And we agree with the President that these are serious problems that need to be resolved.

With all that said. What do we do? As this Congress has more than amply demonstrated, these are very, very difficult problems. Here’s what we think Congress should and should not do.

First of all, don’t go over the cliff. We recognize that there are people on both sides of the political spectrum who see that there is a tactical advantage to actually going over the fiscal cliff. Allowing the tax cuts to expire would make it easier to roll them back with less generous reductions later. Sequestration would make significant cuts. But going over the cliff would spook the markets more than they have been already. We think it’s a bad idea and it is a dereliction of duty.

Second, do pass a serious down payment on debt and deficit reduction. We outlined \$2 trillion in cuts in our recent Sliding Past Sequestration report. There are lots and lots of wasteful spending and tax provisions that could be cut immediately.

Third, defense has to be on the table for short and long term deficit reduction. We believe in the bank robber Willie Sutton’s theory when it comes to the budget. Cut where the money is,

and at least in terms of the discretionary budget, that's defense. If you want to have real savings, you have to go there and there needs to be real savings.

Fourth, absolutely we should do tax and entitlement reform. But let's leave that to the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress. Those are very serious policy discussions, and those decisions need to be made by the body that is accountable to the American people. That doesn't mean that lawmakers can't touch a single tax break in the lame duck, there are plenty of things that can be done now. There are small steps where there is fairly wide agreement that can help make a down payment toward debt and deficit reduction.

Fifth, don't shoehorn major legislation into the lame duck. Don't pass a farm bill. Don't try to do other major legislative business that has been outstanding that they haven't been able to get done.

Sixth, thinking about the events of the last couple weeks, if there has to be emergency aid for those affected by Sandy, they have to be done thoughtfully and with the deficit in mind. We have to meet the needs of these communities in a way that we can afford.

In short, Congress needs to do the minimum necessary to avoid the fiscal cliff in a fiscally responsible manner and then pass the baton to the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress for real and substantive spending, tax, and entitlement reform.

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