Debt Panel Should Conduct Business in Public

WASHINGTON - Congressman Vern Buchanan, who authored the "Sunshine Resolution" during the health care debate in 2009, today urged congressional leaders to make all "super-committee" deliberations open to the public .

The 12-member panel – the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction -- was authorized under the new debt-ceiling legislation signed into law this week by President Obama. It has until Nov. 23 to report back to Congress with recommendations of at least $1.2 trillion in additional budget savings over the next 10 years.

"This is a pivotal point in our nation's history," said Buchanan. "The critical decisions made by the joint committee should be conducted under the watchful eye of the American people."

Buchanan added, "In the past, massive legislative measures have been written in the middle-of-the-night by a handful of members and staff, and then quickly passed into law before the American people have a chance to even see what the final version looks like, let alone determine how they feel about it. This is not acceptable."

It remains unclear what recommendations the joint committee will make, but press reports indicate that tax reform and entitlement reform could be on the table. The committee's final recommendation will be brought to the House and Senate for an up-or-down vote – without amendment – before Christmas.

"The state of Florida leads the nation with one of the toughest right-to-know laws in the country," said Buchanan. "Florida's strong Sunshine Law guards against back-room deals and secret negotiations by government officials. I urge congressional leaders to follow Florida's lead and let sun shine on the joint committee."

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