

Congressman Paul Ryan
Chairman, House Budget Committee
1233 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

April 9, 2012

Dear Chairman Ryan:

Last year I wrote to you urging that you, being of strong convictions and respected by your wing of the Republican Party, debate Paul Krugman of Princeton University. Too often the public is not presented with detailed and contrasting presentations of issues that a debate such as this can join for greater elucidation.

On April 2, Paul Krugman, writing in *The New York Times*, analyzed your recent budget plan and its 98-page manifesto supporting it. Citing the nonpartisan Tax Policy Center's review of your proposal, Professor Krugman wrote:

“So the Ryan budget is a fraud; Mr. Ryan talks loudly about the evils of debt and deficits, but his plan would actually make the deficit bigger even as it inflicted huge pain in the name of deficit reduction. But is his budget really the most fraudulent in American history? Yes, it is.”

Mr. Ryan, you cannot take this lying down. And you cannot decline to debate him, with an impartial moderator mutually approved, by saying you would not deign to go down to his level. After all, he is a Princeton professor and Nobel Laureate. So give this idea further consideration. What can you lose? You'll get your message across to the mass media far more extensively than through the sound bytes that presently deliver your views by the short-attention-span members of the fourth estate.

In the alternative, suppose you do not want to debate someone from outside of Congress. Then why not debate your counterparts – Representatives such as Barney Frank or Chris Van Hollen or Tammy Baldwin? What is missing in your performance since you came to fame is a willingness to discuss your proposals, even with opponents from within the House of Representatives, in a structured debate with adequate time for a serious back-and-forth exchange. Being a prominent soliloquist is not enough.

Senator James Inhofe (R-Okla.) has accepted my invitation to debate Representative Ed Markey (D-Mass.) on the subject of global warming and climate change sometime in May 2012. There should be more deliberate, special debates in such a format, as they surpass the depth of the debates on the floors of the House and Senate. Both Senator Inhofe and Representative Markey understand this point.

Will history record that Representative Paul Ryan, so insistent on his point-of-view in media interviews, would not carry that level of urgency into an arena where he can be knowledgeably challenged with an opportunity to rebut point by point?

I look forward to the courtesy of a response.

Sincerely yours,

Ralph Nader

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Enclosed: Copy of First Letter