

Speaking Out

U.S. House Speaker John Boehner talks about what the new Republican majority means for states.



US. House Speaker John Boehner, an 11-term member of Congress from Ohio, is presiding over a chamber that underwent enormous change in the 2010 election. Voters in November not only swept a GOP majority into the U.S. House, but also sent nearly 700 new Republican lawmakers to statehouses around the country, giving the party the largest number of state legislative seats in almost 100 years.

State Legislatures recently asked Speaker Boehner about the election, what the new Congress means for states, the federal health reform bill, jobs, education, redistricting and more.

STATE LEGISLATURES: What do you think voters said in the November election?

HOUSE SPEAKER BOEHNER: Whether at the state or federal level, it was clear the politicians in charge weren't listening to the people. It's as simple as that. Americans are asking "Where are the jobs?" but all they got from the previous

U.S. House Speaker John Boehner talks with Brian Williams of NBC News in the Capitol's Statuary Hall.

majority in Washington was more "stimulus" spending and more debt.

SL: How will your agenda for the 112th Congress respond to that message?

BOEHNER: Creating jobs and cutting spending are our top two priorities. Republicans may still be outnumbered in Washington, but with the American people and reform-minded governors and state legislators standing with us, there's a lot we can do together to stop runaway spending and create a better environment for private-sector job growth.

SL: This was the third so-called "wave" election in three election cycles. What would prevent a fourth?

BOEHNER: Listening to the American people.

As long as we do that and focus on their priorities—creating jobs and cutting spending—we'll do just fine.

SL: By the time this interview is printed, you'll have completed your first 100 days as speaker. What do you hope to have accomplished?

BOEHNER: We have a fundamentally different approach to the economy than the failed "stimulus" spending binge that Democrats offered over the last two years. We're focused on common-sense solutions that create a better environment for private-sector job creation. Whether it's reining in excessive government spending that's hampering the economy and interfering with job creation, repealing the job-destroying health care law that is imposing crippling mandates on small businesses, or stopping harmful regulations that are undermining our economy, we're focused on jobs.

SL: Would you support limiting or even eliminating federal mandates on states when federal funding is reduced or eliminated?

BOEHNER: Absolutely. I understand the fiscal challenges governors and state legislators face, and it's maddening when Washington imposes burdensome mandates on states that cripple their ability to make sound financial decisions. We've heard from many governors and state legislators that they need more flexibility in the Medicaid program and that maintenance of effort requirements prevent them from managing this program effectively. Medicaid reform cannot happen without governors and state legislators, so we're going to work with you to see if we can find common ground.

SL: How can state governments work with Congress and the federal government to address the federal deficit?

BOEHNER: We're broke. One solution that's off the table is more money from the federal government, because clearly we don't have it. But this isn't just about *what* we spend but *how* we spend. This is where I think we have an opportunity to work together, giving states more freedom and flexibility from onerous federal rules and mandates to design programs that work better for the states. That's an area where I hope to make progress.

SL: You were chairman of the House Education and Workforce Committee when No Child Left Behind was enacted. Do you think it has been effective, and what changes would you like to

JOHN BOEHNER

U.S. Speaker of the House, 112th Congress

Born: Nov. 17, 1949, Cincinnati, Ohio

Family: Wife Debbie, children Lindsay and Tricia

Education: Xavier University, bachelor's degree in business, 1977

Military: Joined the Navy in 1968, but was discharged because of a back injury.

Business career: Worked for Nucite Sales, a small sales business in the packaging and plastics industry, after graduating from college. He became president of the firm.

Political career: Union Township trustee, 1982-8. Ohio House of Representatives, 1984-1990. U.S. House of Representatives, 1990-present. Elected speaker in 2011.

see made to NCLB in reauthorization?

BOEHNER: Earlier this year, I introduced bipartisan legislation with Senator Joe Lieberman to save the successful D.C. school choice program, which has helped thousands of disadvantaged students gain access to a quality education. There's only one program in America where the federal government allows parents from lower-income families to choose the schools that are best for their children, and it's in Washington, D.C. The D.C. program provides a model I believe can work well in other communities around the nation—it should be expanded, not ended. If we're serious about bipartisan education reform, then this bipartisan education bill should be the starting point.

SL: The House recently passed legislation to repeal the 2010 health care reform law. Are you considering other options to address health care reform? Would you consider legislation to change the law, or is repeal the only option?

BOEHNER: You can't fix something that is so fundamentally flawed. The fact is ObamaCare already is destroying jobs, and it does nothing to lower health care costs. That's why we will continue our efforts to repeal the law and replace it with common-sense solutions that would lower health care costs and protect American jobs, as we stated in our Pledge to America. In addition to our broader repeal bill, we'll advance

legislation to repeal specific parts of the law. For example, there is bipartisan support in both the House and Senate for repealing the onerous 1099 mandates on small businesses. Our committees are all engaged in this effort right now, holding hearings, examining potential solutions, and discussing these issues with all the relevant stakeholders. States will certainly play a key role in this effort.

SL: The president is reaching out to the business community to reduce the burden of federal regulations. Under your leadership, will there be a similar outreach to states to identify federal regulations that are burdensome and costly?

BOEHNER: I'm a former small businessman. I ran a small business, met a payroll, created jobs. I've seen first-hand how government makes it harder for small businesses to create jobs and make ends meet. Excessive government regulation crushes jobs, and we want to work with reform-minded governors and state lawmakers to identify harmful regulations that create obstacles to real economic growth. At the federal level, our majority already has passed a resolution to inventory and review federal agency rules and regulations that may be making it harder to create jobs and grow the economy. In addition, consistent with our Pledge to America, we're going to pass Representative Geoff Davis' REINS Act, which requires con-

gressional approval for any new regulation with an economic impact of more than \$100 million.

SL: During the 2010 campaign, you made the question "Where are the jobs?" a standard in your appearances. What will the House Republicans do to create more jobs and enhance job security?

BOEHNER: At 9 percent unemployment, Americans are still asking that question today. We've tried their approach of more "stimulus" spending. It failed. We're focused on solutions that create a better environment for job creation.

Speaker John Boehner talks with Sean Hannity during a live radio interview.





Speaker John Boehner takes the gavel to preside over the 112th Congress.

Here are a few examples we've outlined that were included in our Pledge to America:

- ◆ Stimulating private-sector investment by encouraging small businesses to create jobs through a new tax deduction.
- ◆ Reducing ongoing economic uncertainty by stopping job-killing tax hikes on small businesses.
- ◆ Reining in excessive government spending that is hampering the economy and crippling job creation.
- ◆ Repealing the health care law.
- ◆ Stopping regulations that make it harder for small businesses to hire.

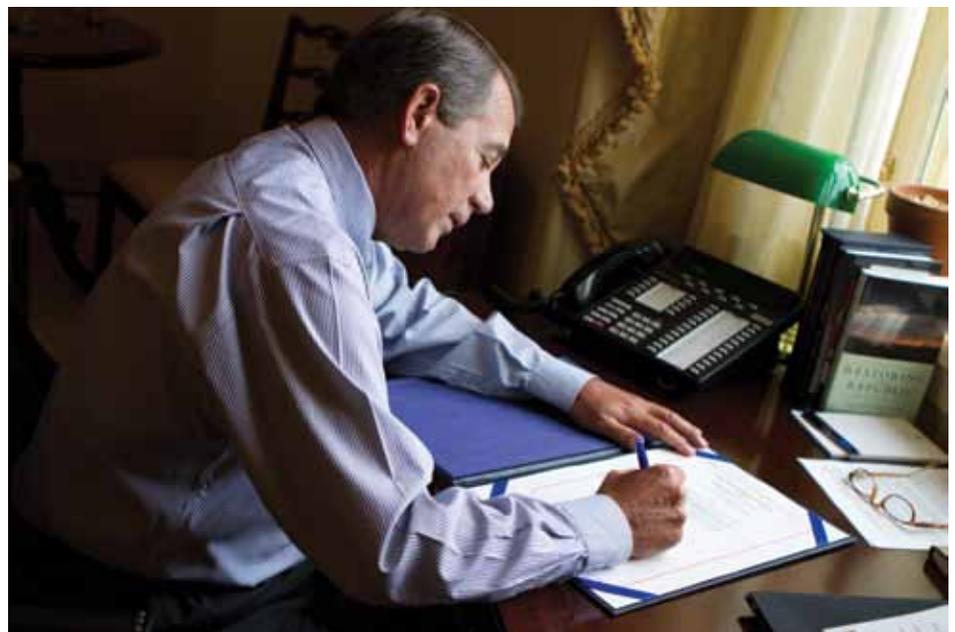
By reducing economic uncertainty and encouraging greater private-sector investment in our economy, we can create a better environment for job creation and increase Americans' job security.

SL: One of your focuses is to rebuild trust between the American people and their representatives in Washington, D.C. What actions are you taking toward this goal?

BOEHNER: This is the people's House. This is their Congress. It's about them, not us. What they want is a government that is honest, account-

Speaker John Boehner works in his Capitol office in January.

able and responsive to their needs. We started on the opening day of this Congress by passing reforms that emphasized real transparency, greater accountability and a renewed focus on the Constitution. Legislators and the public now have three days to read bills before they come to a vote. Committees, once bloated, are smaller, with a renewed mission, including oversight. Old rules that made it easy to increase spending have been replaced by new reforms that make it easier to cut spending. We started by cutting Congress' own budget. Above all else, we welcome the battle of ideas, encourage it, and engage in it—openly,



honestly and respectfully. As the chamber closes to the people, the House works best when it is allowed to work its will.

SL: State legislatures will be addressing redistricting in this legislative session. What kind of changes do you think it will bring to Congress?

BOEHNER: Redistricting will be a long process, but it will certainly have an impact as it does every 10 years. In Ohio, we'll work closely with our state leaders and the legislature to ensure the process is open, transparent and fair.

SL: Like you, almost half of your congressional colleagues have served in state legislatures. How did your state legislative service prepare you to serve in Congress?

BOEHNER: I learned a lot as a state legislator, working with state and local leaders to try and make a difference in our communities. As a member of Congress, I believe it's critical to work together with members of our state legislatures, as well as leaders in our local communities, to try and solve problems.

SL: What is it like to be speaker of the 112th Congress? What advice would you give to state legislative leaders?

BOEHNER: It's an honor to be selected by my colleagues for this job. But I didn't come to Washington for a title or any recognition. I came here to do something on behalf of the American people. That is what still drives me today. My advice to anyone is just be yourself, work hard and be honest. Those are qualities that can help anyone be successful. 🏠