



CITY OF BOSTON • MASSACHUSETTS

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
THOMAS M. MENINO

December 1, 2012

President Barack Obama
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Speaker John Boehner
House of Representatives
1011 Longworth H.O.B.
Washington, DC 20515

Dear President Obama and Speaker Boehner,

I know a little bit about the importance of funding for health research, training, and care. Boston is home to the #1 medical school in the country and the #1 hospital in the country. Researchers in Boston earn more NIH support than in any other city. Health care companies and institutions employ more people than any other sector.

Oh, and there's this: I just spent a month in one of our world-class health care institutions and am writing you from another.

So, yes, my perspective on the big budget debate happening in Washington is unique. Politicians are not used to taking orders. But here, doctors tell me what to do. (Actually, it's the amazing nurses.) In Washington, "winning the 24-hour news cycle" is victory. You know what victory is for patients down the hall from me? Walking.

I hope you'll understand that if my tone is unusually blunt (even for me), it is because one sees things differently here. I have to ask as you work to avoid the "fiscal cliff": Talk differently to the American people.

We don't seek "austerity". Austerity describes hospital food and institutional walls. Show us opportunity. Sell us on progress.

Tell us the truth, especially on taxes. Brian, my nurse, doesn't come to my room in the morning to say, "Mayor, if you just sit here, unburdened by taxing exercises, free from our rehab rules and regulations, you will get stronger." He tells it like it is. You can, too.

And tell those who can do more, to do more. In a hospital, it gets real clear real fast about what real fortune is. We need more "there but for the grace of God go I" and less, dare I say, "I built that."

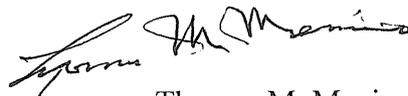
I'll be honest with you. I've endured a lot of pain over the last month. But except for my family and the support of the great people of Boston, you know what's gotten me through? The knowledge that literally nowhere else in the world is there a better place to get healthy than Boston. They don't make pain medicine for "If I had only been born somewhere else."

Other people come here to get well. It would make a good national motto. And it's a good reminder now. We can't slash funding for health research. Not \$200 to \$300 million a year in Massachusetts. Not \$2.5 billion annually at the NIH.

Outside of Washington, we don't spend all day on your potential "Grand Bargain." Here, the term sounds like the frozen smoothie Brian offers me in exchange for another go at the stair machine. But if it means you'll come together for the American people, do that. We've had enough Democrat and Republican speak for a while.

The fiscal cliff is bad for our country, and so is any remedy that guts funding for discovery, for health care training, and for healing. I write to urge you and all of your counterparts to give it to us straight on that fact, even from here. Especially from here.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas M. Menino". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "T" and "M".

Thomas M. Menino
Mayor, City of Boston