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HUFFINGTON
POST

The Mantra of This Congress Should Be: Jobs! Jobs! Jobs!

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October 16, 2013

Unemployment is still the crisis of our time. Yet Congress has had to put the issue on the back-burner because of the endless shenanigans of a small group of lawmakers.

As a member of the 113th Congress, I can thankfully tell you that the Republican Party is starting the learning process. Members of the GOP are slowly internalizing an important truth that they've long resisted:

Government is a job-creator.

It was not just plummeting poll numbers that pushed so many Republicans to accept a deal to end the crisis. It was also the practical realization that we need government workers to inspect our food, to manage our immigration system, to conduct medical research, to provide nutrition assistance to pregnant women, to clean up hazardous waste sites, to administer early education, and to approve small business loans.

And, as much as anything, it was the realization that shutting down the government is a job-killer.

Last week, as the full effects of the government shutdown set in, new unemployment claims jumped to their highest level in six months. This was the biggest single-week rise in unemployment since Hurricane Sandy left tens of thousands of people out of work last year.

With the spectacular failure of the Republicans' Government Shutdown experiment, it becomes harder for Republicans to argue that government is the source of our nation's economic problems. To the contrary, the problem has been the GOP's anti-government crusade. As the

independent economic consulting firm Macroeconomic Advisers revealed this week, the budget battles, debt-ceiling showdowns, and budget cuts that have consumed Congress since the Republican takeover in 2010 have cost the United States an estimated \$700 billion in economic activity and more than two million jobs.

The polls make clear that even many Republicans are starting to get it: The political games are not only corrosive to our democracy but destructive to our economy.

So what to do with this new-found national realization?

Pivot to a real jobs agenda.

While the shutdown crisis is over, the unemployment crisis remains as serious as ever. Nearly 12 million people are still officially out of work and tens of millions more are underemployed or have simply given up looking. These are not just numbers but painful stories of lost homes and lost healthcare.

Democrats have proven policy proposals -- including the American Jobs Act of 2013 and the Jobs Now Act, both of which I recently introduced, the 21st Century Full Employment Act, which Congressman John Conyers of Michigan has sponsored, and the Make It in America Agenda, which Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer has championed -- any of which could go a long way toward ending the unemployment crisis that has been with us since the start of the Great Recession.

Let's seize the moment, and return Congress to its rightful mantra: Jobs, Jobs, Jobs!