

Opinion: Pledging allegiance to a lobbyist is bad for the country

By Anna G. Eshoo

The Constitution gave birth to the world's greatest democracy and stands as our country's timeless statement of our fundamental laws, beliefs and ideals. It requires an oath of office for those selected as guardians of our principles.

At the opening of each new Congress, we "solemnly swear ... to support and defend the Constitution of the United States ... to bear true faith and allegiance ..." and to "well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office." I took this oath, and I keep this oath sacred. But today, the Founding Fathers' shared ideals enshrined in the Constitution stand marred by special interests.

Sadly, before taking the oath to our Constitution, 233 of my colleagues in the House of Representatives and 41 members of the Senate had already pledged their allegiance to a lobbyist, Grover Norquist, the president of Americans for Tax Reform. By signing his Taxpayers Protection Pledge, these members have vowed to oppose any and all efforts to ever increase taxes on businesses and individuals, and to protect all tax breaks and deductions.

On the surface, this pledge might seem tolerable, to some admirable. But in practice, this special-interest oath is jeopardizing our country's fiscal health. In recent years, the pledge has effectively prevented any compromise. Pledge legislators have kept Congress from moving forward or accomplishing vital legislative goals, such as deficit reduction and job creation.

We most recently witnessed the destructive power of this pledge with the failure of the so-called supercommittee that was tasked with finding \$1.2 trillion in cuts to the federal budget for deficit reduction. Its failure sadly surprised nobody. Every Republican on the supercommittee had signed this pledge and refused to consider closing tax loopholes, raising revenue or increasing any taxes.

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