

Unfinished business awaiting action in 2014

Pat Perriello | Dec. 30, 2013 NCR Today

I want to highlight some of my hopes for the New Year in areas of government and the church. Many of these hopes represent topics which we are likely to be talking about throughout much of 2014.

In the world of government there is much unfinished business. The year ended on a positive note with the budget agreement crafted by Congressman Paul Ryan and Senator Patty Murray. The agreement resolves budget issues for two years and provides an opportunity to move on and address other pressing matters.

The first item of business that needs to be addressed involves raising the debt limit. It should be done quickly and extended past the next election cycle to again provide a window for work to proceed on other issues. Any attempt to achieve political gains over the need to raise the debt limit will move us backwards in terms of getting the work of the government done.

The issue of extended unemployment benefits also needs quick action. Even a short extension that is retroactive could enable many to feed their families and would also serve to strengthen the economy.

This is the year when comprehensive immigration reform needs to be enacted into law, with a path to citizenship and strong border security.

Sentiment is growing for an increase in the minimum wage to perhaps [\\$10.10 an hour](#) [1].

It would do much to lift many out of poverty.

We need to find a way to make all of us safer and protect our children from gun violence.

There is common ground out there, as no one wants to see more of the kind of carnage we have seen in 2013. People need to come forward in or out of government to craft such legislation.

We have seen some moderate progress with the Affordable Care Act in the last few weeks of the year. Hopefully, any remaining glitches in the website will be corrected and thousands of additional Americans will be able to sign up for much needed health care. We also need to hope that recalcitrant governors will begin to use available funds to enable many citizens of their states to benefit from Medicaid provisions. Problems will no doubt remain, but wouldn't it be a really good thing if bipartisan efforts were made to improve the Affordable Care Act rather than destroy it?

Significant infrastructure spending is also needed for two reasons. First, because bridges, schools, and highways are crumbling in our country and that should matter to all of us. Second, despite a growing economy unemployment is still way too high, and the need for jobs must remain a top priority.

I know the agenda I have outlined is antithetical to many in Congress, but I think that is what a new year is all about. Now is the time to consider a new way of looking at things and to extend the spirit of cooperation between the Paul Ryan's and Patty Murray's of Congress and get things done. Each of these issues can and

should be addressed. The outcome in each case will not be exactly what any of us would want. Yet, just as is true of the imperfect budget deal, each issue that is resolved will make our country stronger, better, more fair, and will help move the country forward. That should be an important goal for all of us.

I will explore some of my hopes for the church in my next entry. Happy New Year!

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Links:

[1] <http://www.raisetheminimumwage.com/pages/fair-minimum-wage-act-of-2013>