

you are trying to do. I understand that George Voinovich has introduced a similar bill in the Senate.

While I would like to think that the economic and moral case for serious reform is compelling enough to spur action without resort to another commission, I fear that the reality is otherwise. Given the harsh partisan environment you note in your letter, I have come to believe that a new commission could serve a very useful trust-building purpose—so long as it is truly bipartisan and all policy options are on the table.

You clearly agree with these principles, which is one reason I think your bill could help break the political gridlock. It is an added bonus, in my view, that your bill would require the commission to hold public hearings around the country and compel congressional consideration of the commission's recommendations. As one who has sat on many commissions, including the Kerrey-Danforth entitlement and tax reform commission more than 10 years ago, I think all of these special attributes bode well for the success of a commission formed pursuant to your bill.

As you may know, I serve as President of The Concord Coalition. Former Senators Warren Rudman (who I know you have spoken to about this) and Bob Kerrey are co-chairs of The Concord Coalition. We have been urging bipartisan action to bring about a more sustainable and generationally equitable fiscal policy for many years. Our executive director, Bob Bixby, has sent you a letter with our approval on behalf of The Concord Coalition expressing our appreciation and commending you for your leadership in drawing attention to one of the nation's most daunting challenges. To that, let me add my personal thanks and encouragement.

Sincerely,

PETER G. PETERSON.

MANATT JONES,
GLOBAL STRATEGIES,

Washington, DC, June 26, 2006.

Hon. FRANK R. WOLF,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN WOLF: Thank you for your letter and for sending me a copy of your legislation, H.R. 5552. I can't speak highly enough in commending you for leading this much needed effort and for the comprehensiveness of your proposal.

As a former House Budget Committee Chairman who subsequently headed the American Stock Exchange among other business activities since leaving the Congress, I have been appalled and discouraged by the recklessness and disregard of our government's fiscal policy. These unconscious deficits and mounting federal debt load financed primarily by foreigners are an economic time bomb waiting to explode. If I were managing a private company this irresponsibly, the shareholders should demand my resignation.

We hear much talk about our national security and energy security. But to put our economic security so much in the hands of foreign interests is gambling at its worst.

In addition to the economic dangers, this is also a moral issue in that our generation is saddling our children and grandchildren with the responsibility for paying off our profligacy. That can only reduce the standard of living of future generations. How can we justify such immorality?

I am so proud that you are stepping forward to try to pass legislation with teeth to force both the Congress and the Executive Branch to make hard choices to get our fiscal house on a path to responsibility. I hope that you will make this a bipartisan effort. I will be pleased to support you in every way I can and to urge my fellow Democrats to join you in this effort.

Sincerely yours,

JAMES R. JONES.

THE URBAN INSTITUTE,
Washington, DC, June 22, 2006.

Representative FRANK WOLF,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE WOLF: In response to your letter of June 16, I strongly support your bill to establish a national bipartisan commission on entitlement spending and tax policy. Although many are cynical about the prospects for the success of any commission, I think that you are right that the current political climate is not conducive to passing constructive legislation without some prodding from the outside.

I also believe that the American public is not ready to accept the sacrifices necessary to avoid a crisis, because the dire nature of the situation has not been well communicated by policy makers. Therefore, I particularly commend your idea of holding town meetings across the country and I would hope that the commission has a large budget for this purpose, because I believe that we need lots of meetings. Ideally, the commission would first produce a white paper that could be discussed at the meetings. It would outline the problem in the most objective way possible and describe the major options for solving it.

It is interesting to note that Canada had such meetings prior to a significant reform of their social security system and Canadian officials will tell you that they were extremely helpful in finding a solution. Similarly, Britain is in the midst of reforming their public pension system and they used large focus groups to test their options. I would prefer a town meeting to a focus group format, but however one proceeds, the involvement of the public is absolutely crucial.

I wish you success in getting your idea enacted and would be willing to help in any way that I can.

Yours sincerely,

RUDOLPH G. PENNER.

WOODROW WILSON INTERNATIONAL
CENTER FOR SCHOLARS,
Washington, DC, July 7, 2006.

Hon. FRANK R. WOLF,
Washington, DC.

DEAR FRANK: Thank you for sending along your excellent proposal to establish a national bipartisan commission on America's looming fiscal crisis. I agree that we must hastily address the very grave financial challenges before our Nation. You have laid out a thoughtful and effective way forward. In particular, it is important to put everything on the table—entitlement spending, federal programs, and tax policy. Mandating congressional action would also ensure that a prospective commission does not issue a report that gathers dust on a shelf.

On another note, the Iraq Study Group continues to make excellent progress, and I once again thank you for your leadership and support of our efforts.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,

LEE H. HAMILTON.

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION,
Washington, DC, July 14, 2006.

Hon. FRANK R. WOLF,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR FRANK: I am writing to express my hope your bill, H.R. 5552, Securing America's Future Economy (SAFE) Act, will be swiftly enacted. You and I have discussed this bill and the impending fiscal crises it is designed to avoid.

I am not able to detail in a single page all the fiscal difficulties we face, nor to list all the arguments in favor of H.R. 5552, but I believe it offers the Congress an opportunity

for a comprehensive fiscal solution, so the country will not have to face an ongoing series of crises, each demanding a patchwork, probably temporary, and certainly painful, response.

While the BRAC-type Commission necessarily forces Legislation action, H.R. 5552 does provide unusual, extra Legislative discretion by giving the Congress opportunities to enact alternatives not suggested by the Commission.

H.R. 5552 has my enthusiastic endorsement. I hope the House passes it first.

Sincerely,

BILL FRENZEL.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. KEVIN MCCARTHY

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 19, 2007

Mr. MCCARTHY of California. Madam Speaker, on rollcall No. 33, H. Res. 58, "To honor Muhammad Ali, global humanitarian, on the occasion of his 65th birthday and to extend best wishes to him and his family."

Had I been present, I would have voted "yes."

MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG PRICE NEGOTIATION ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. GARY G. MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 12, 2007

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I was not able to vote on H.R. 4, the Medicare Prescription Drug Price Negotiation Act of 2007 because I had to travel back to California due to a death in the family. I would like the record to reflect that had I been here, I would have voted "no" on H.R. 4 and "aye" on the Motion to Commit. H.R. 4 will not, as some claim, save Medicare beneficiaries money on their prescription drugs. All that this ill-conceived bill will do is to restrict beneficiary access to necessary drugs, stifle medical advancements, and limit the pharmacies that seniors can utilize.

In the last year, seniors have been able to enjoy outpatient prescription drug coverage under Medicare for the first time in the program's history. Every Medicare-eligible senior now has access to a voluntary, affordable prescription drug benefit, with extra help available for low income seniors. Consumers in my state of California can choose from over fifty national, state and regional plans, which cover brand name and generic drugs. The hallmark of this program is choice. Under the current system, covered seniors can continue to visit their neighborhood pharmacies and have access to the medications that have been prescribed to them by their doctors.

Recent data indicates that the current system of incorporating private sector principles into the prescription drug plan is working to control costs, while providing prescription drug coverage to millions of seniors who did not have it previously. Independent estimates for the Medicare Part D prescription drug benefit for Fiscal Year 2008 show that net costs are thirty percent less than were originally predicted when the benefit was created four