

sense tells us that a single mother cannot effectively provide for her children on \$10,000 a year. Because many of these mothers are forced to work extra hours or a second job to afford food and rent, their children end up spending most of their time without a parent at home to raise them.

If America is indeed the Land of Opportunity, we must reward those who pay their dues. A parent working full-time at the current minimum wage of \$5.15 an hour is likely living below the federal poverty level, and is often unable to afford what their children deserve: rent in a safe neighborhood, decent child care, and enough food on the table.

The minimum wage issue is ultimately a question about our fundamental values as Americans. Do we value hard work? Do we believe that people who work full-time should be able to support themselves? To support their families? Isn't it our job to support those who want a hand up, and not a hand out?

I believe the answer to these questions is yes, and I believe that most Americans agree with me.

I am pleased that the House of Representatives, under the leadership of Speaker NANCY PELOSI, brought this bill to the Floor during the first 100 hours of the 110th Congress. The priorities of working Americans are truly the priorities of this House of Representatives.

I am hopeful that the United States Senate will also make a minimum wage hike a priority and pass this bill as soon as possible. I am encouraged by the President's recently expressed willingness to cooperate with Democrats on this issue. The President's signature cannot come soon enough; the bill's initial 70 cent increase does not take place until 60 days after H.R. 2 becomes law. Mr. Speaker, nearly 13 million hard-working Americans have waited long enough.

SUPPORT FOR THE SAFE
COMMISSION

HON. FRANK R. WOLF

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 12, 2007

Mr. WOLF. Madam Speaker, I am planning to reintroduced legislation in the House of Representatives aimed at addressing the looming financial crisis facing the Nation, the Securing America's Future Economy, SAFE, Commission Act. The bill would establish a national bipartisan commission that will put everything—entitlement spending as well as all other Federal programs and our Nation's tax policies—on the table and require Congress to vote up or down on its recommendations in their entirety, similar to the process set in 1988 to close military bases. Mandating congressional action on the panel's recommendations is what differentiates this commission from previous ones.

Support for the bill is coming from both sides of the aisle. I submit for the record an analysis by the Heritage Foundation and a letter of support from the Concord Coalition.

This legislation will be good for the future of America.

THE HERITAGE FOUNDATION,
Washington, DC, July 14, 2006.

THE WOLF SAFE COMMISSION ACT: A CHANCE
TO GET THE BUDGET BACK ON TRACK
(By Stuart Butler)

The recent Mid-Session Review by the Office of Management and Budget underscores the facts that sensible tax reform stimulates the economy and that faster growth swells revenue to the government as a byproduct of new jobs and extra income for Americans. The review also confirms the overall, disturbing long-term budget picture indicated in the Congressional Budget Office's (CBO) long-term forecast. Under current law, both taxes and spending will rise rapidly during future decades towards European levels, with an ever-growing government taking a larger and larger proportion of the nation's income and threatening America's future economic growth. Decisive action is needed.

But faced with this threat, Washington is paralyzed. Rather than seriously tackling the tsunami of entitlement spending that will hit the budget after the baby boomers begin to retire, Congress actually made the situation far worse by enacting the huge Medicare prescription drug benefit. And while the Bush tax reforms have significantly helped in the short term, even if made permanent they would shave only about one percentage point from the future growth in taxes. Absent any additional reforms, the CBO forecasts that, with the Bush tax cuts extended, federal taxes will top 20 percent of GDP by about 2025 and approach 23 percent of GDP by 2045. The historical average, and today's level, is just over 18 percent of GDP.

With Congress polarized and paralyzed, some Members of Congress, along with President Bush, are exploring the idea of a bipartisan commission as a way to break away from the path of rapidly rising spending and taxes. President Bush pressed for an entitlements commission in his State of the Union address. Senator Judd Gregg (R-NH) has sponsored legislation (S. 3521) that includes a commission to review the long-term solvency of Social Security and Medicare. Meanwhile, Representative Frank Wolf (R-VA) has crafted a commission bill ("The SAFE Commission Act," H.R. 5552) specifically intended to win bipartisan support for bold action to secure the country's fiscal and economic future. Senator George Voinovich (R-OH) has introduced that bill in the Senate (S. 3491).

Commissions can help break a political logjam. They can also become vehicles for action that achieves a short-term political fix and yet does little in the long term or even makes things worse. So the political dynamics and mandate of a commission are critical. Fortunately, the Wolf commission bill recognizes these facts of political life and offers real hope for sensible action. A reason for this is that in its instructions to the commission, the bill wisely combines reform with fiscal changes in a manner that could achieve a breakthrough.

The core of the fiscal problem is the sharp projected rise in future entitlement spending, especially spending on programs for middle-class retirees. Contrary to many people's perception, taxes are not falling—as noted, taxes are projected to rise steadily to record levels under current law, in real terms and as a percentage of GDP. Still, in today's political deadlock many lawmakers maintain that tax revenue must be part of the equation if they are to have the political "cover" to accept curbs on popular entitlements.

But for good reasons, conservatives strongly resist the idea of raising taxes. For one thing, taxes are not the problem—spending is. Moreover, raising tax rates or instituting

new taxes would threaten economic growth, compounding the economic harm associated with government spending. Further, raising taxes likely would reduce the pressure on Congress to curb spending or, worse still, encourage lawmakers to increase their spending promises.

The Wolf bill seeks a solution to this political equation. It creates a bipartisan commission intended to address the unsustainable imbalance between federal commitments and revenues while increasing national savings and making the budget process give greater emphasis to long-term fiscal issues. While the commission could consider a range of approaches, the bill places emphasis on two: reforms that would limit the growth of entitlements while strengthening the safety net and tax reforms that would make the tax system more economically efficient and improve economic growth. The commission would hold public hearings around the country to discuss the long-term fiscal problem, and its recommendations would receive fast-track consideration by Congress.

By combining a slowdown in entitlement spending with reforms to strengthen assistance to the needy, a commission proposal could win support of liberals and others who worry that surging middle-class retiree spending in the future will crowd out safety net spending. And by placing an emphasis on pro-growth tax reform, a commission proposal could also lead to some additional revenues not by raising taxes but thanks instead to faster economic growth—just as the Bush tax reforms produced the recent sharp increase in federal revenues. Combining these features in a commission proposal could lead to a package that conservatives, liberals, and moderates all believe would advance their agendas—a necessary result for an economically sound agreement to succeed in a polarized Congress.

Some might argue that appointing a commission to address the long-term fiscal situation is an abrogation of responsibility by Congress. In an obvious sense, it is. But the Wolf bill also shows that lawmakers recognize that America's budgeting system is broken and in the current environment cannot lead to a responsible long-term federal budget. Representative Wolf's commission proposal seeks to alter those destructive dynamics in order to secure a sound economy for future generations.

THE CONCORDE COALITION,
Arlington, VA, June 28, 2006.

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

DEAR MR. WOLF: On behalf of The Concord Coalition, I am writing to express our deep appreciation for your leadership in sponsoring the Securing America's Future Economy, SAFE, Act, which would establish a bipartisan commission to recommend legislation addressing our Nation's unsustainable long-term fiscal outlook.

We strongly agree with you that the need for serious action is not just an economic imperative but a moral one as well. We also share your view that partisan divisions in Washington have become so wide that a commission may now be the only way forward on this issue. By establishing a fiscal policy commission with a broad mandate, meaningful public engagement, and the ability to consider all policy options, your legislation represents a very constructive step toward bringing about consensus solutions.

The demographic and fiscal challenges facing the budget in the years ahead are well known. Analysts of diverse ideological perspectives and nonpartisan officials at the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) and the Government Accountability Office (GAO)

have all warned that current fiscal policy is unsustainable over the long-term.

What is needed now is a clear commitment to address these issues in a straightforward, generationally equitable and bipartisan manner. Achieving consensus around the hard choices that must eventually be made will require open minds and bipartisan cooperation. Your legislation would establish a process to do just that.

Recently, The Concord Coalition organized a forum with experts from across the political spectrum to discuss the possibility of establishing a bipartisan commission to deal with our longterm fiscal outlook. Three conclusions from the forum stand out:

The commission must have meaningful participation and input from a broad range of views. Bipartisan support is essential to enacting and maintaining policies that will put the budget on a fiscally sustainable course.

The commission should have a broad mandate with no limitations on what policy options the commission can consider or preconditions on what must be included—or not included—in a proposal. Everything must be on the table, including revenues as well as entitlements and other spending.

The commission should engage the public in a dialogue about the long-term fiscal challenges and the tradeoffs that will be necessary to bring about a more secure and sustainable economic future.

The Concord Coalition commends your proposal because it recognizes each of these conclusions. The SAFE Act would establish a bipartisan commission of experts and legislators appointed by the President and Congressional leaders of both parties. The Commission would be directed to hold hearings across the country and incorporate the input from the public in its report. This is a very welcome provision. The public should be treated as if it were, in effect, a member of the commission. Doing so will enhance the commission's credibility and help build acceptance for its recommendations. Our experience hosting meetings around the nation on this issue has demonstrated that when the American people are armed with the facts and given the opportunity for honest dialogue, they are willing to set priorities and make the hard choices that often are not made in Washington.

Most importantly, the Commission would be allowed to consider all policy options to address the imbalance between long-term spending commitments and projected revenues, including reforms of entitlement programs and tax laws. In our view, this is an essential prerequisite for attracting well-respected individuals to serve on the commission and for finding solutions that are both substantive and politically viable.

We particularly commend you for your willingness to consider constructive suggestions for changes to achieve broader bipartisan support and increase the prospect that the commission will produce a balanced proposal that can be enacted into law. In that regard, we would suggest a few changes that we believe would strengthen the bill and help ensure the commission receives the bipartisan support essential to its success.

We believe the commission would have greater credibility if the appointees were more evenly divided between parties, potentially with some commission members appointed jointly or as a result of bipartisan consultation. Further, we would suggest that the commission have bipartisan co-chairs. We would also encourage you to consider a more expansive legislative process, which would allow for greater debate of policy tradeoffs by allowing the consideration of budget neutral amendments. Those who oppose the priorities and tradeoffs rec-

ommended by the commission should be challenged to say what they would do instead and given the opportunity to put forward alternative policies to address the problem.

A commission isn't a silver bullet that will solve our fiscal problems by itself. It will still take action by Members of Congress and the administration to adopt the tough choices. But a commission with credibility and bipartisan support could provide the leadership necessary to ensure that these issues receive the attention and serious consideration they deserve.

You deserve great credit for your willingness to undertake the difficult but absolutely essential task of focusing attention on the tough choices our nation faces. The Concord Coalition stands ready to assist in any way that we can.

Sincerely,

ROBERT L. BIXBY,
Executive Director.

DEFEATING THE TERRORISTS ABROAD—NOT AT HOME

HON. JOE WILSON

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 12, 2007

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, yesterday afternoon as I was reading *The Examiner*, a Washington daily, I came across an editorial that summed up my view of our current conflict in Iraq and the overall global war on terrorism. I applaud *The Examiner's* editorial staff for declaring what is largely an unpopular view among the mainstream media.

The editorial follows.

[Jan. 11, 2007]

DO WE DEFEAT THE TERRORISTS IN IRAQ NOW OR FIGHT THEM HERE TOMORROW?

WASHINGTON.—President Bush could not have been more frank or honest with the American people than he was last night. That said, the central issue remains today what it has been since the first plane crashed into the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001: Are we as a nation willing to do whatever is required to win the war on terrorism?

Iraq is today the central front in that war, and the president is doing all within his power to defeat the terrorists there now so that we don't have to fight them here in the future.

The president believes the war in Iraq can be won by increasing American troop strength for a period as the Iraqis themselves assume greater responsibilities for securing their country and by increasing U.S. economic aid to rebuild infrastructure and provide jobs.

Calling this troop movement a "surge" was unfortunate because it conveyed the idea of something that isn't going to happen—putting more U.S. soldiers on the ground than we have had heretofore. In fact, as *The Examiner's* Bill Sammon reported yesterday, even with the "surge" announced last night, we will still be a few thousand short of the high water mark of 160,000 U.S. troops a year ago.

More important than the raw numbers is how those troops are deployed.

The president acknowledged last night that mistakes were made in the days leading up to the U.S. action in Iraq and the first phases of building the post-Saddam Hussein Iraq. Working with increased Iraqi military and police forces, our strengthened forces

will now be able to rectify the biggest of those mistakes: failing to eradicate the insurgents completely and not disarming private militias like that of Moqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army. Special attention is to be devoted to Baghdad and Anbar province, with Iraqi army units in the lead.

There will be more U.S. casualties in coming months. But the only way to affirm the sacrifice of American blood and material resources in Iraq is persevering and winning. Iraq is not Vietnam unless congressional Democrats heed extremists like Sen. Ted Kennedy, D-MA, and withdraw funding for the American war effort in Iraq as they did in 1974, which led directly to the fall of Saigon in 1975.

The killing fields followed throughout Southeast Asia as the victors took revenge upon those who looked to America for protection and freedom. The killing fields will come again if America fails now because Iraq will dissolve into chaos and then a jihadist totalitarianism.

Many Rubicons are being crossed on Iraq. There will be no crossing back if we heed the ignoble call to retreat.

IN MEMORY OF DARRENT
WILLIAMS

HON. MICHAEL C. BURGESS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 12, 2007

Mr. BURGESS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to remember Darrent Williams, the Denver Bronco professional football player from Fort Worth, Texas, who passed away at 24 years of age on January 1, 2007.

Darrent Williams will forever be remembered as a talented and compassionate young man who not only loved his family and friends but also proved to be dedicated to his teammates and his adopted city of Denver.

Raised as an only child by his mother Rosalind Williams, Darrent grew up in Fort Worth where he attended O.D. Wyatt High School located in my congressional district. Excelling at three different sports, Mr. Williams received scholarship opportunities from multiple universities. Wanting to stay close to his home in north Texas, Mr. Williams decided to play football at Oklahoma State University. While at Oklahoma State, he was one of only four college players since 1996 to record double-figure interceptions while scoring at least five touchdowns. He was also a Jim Thorpe Award semifinalist, and in 2003 tied at 13th in the Nation with six interceptions. Due to his incredible performance at Oklahoma State, in 2005 Mr. Williams became the Denver Broncos' second-round draft pick and would soon be a starter.

Mr. Williams became known as the "Denver Bronco Kid," a nickname that would spread across the Nation as others recognized his energy, enthusiasm, and talent. As a young professional football player, he not only excelled at the game but also brought strength and cooperation to the team. He was a special person with unbelievable character, and he will continue to be admired by many across the country.

Throughout his life, Darrent Williams portrayed qualities that warmed the hearts of those around him. It was these traits that won