

COOPER, WOLF WRITE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES URGING SUPPORT FOR SAFE COMMISSION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 23, 2007

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WASHINGTON - U.S. Congressmen Jim Cooper (D-TN) and Frank Wolf (R-VA) today released a letter sent to all presidential candidates calling on them to support the Cooper-Wolf proposal to create a long-term spending reform commission. The SAFE Commission Act (H.R. 3654) has already drawn bipartisan support from 48 cosponsors and been heralded by national commentators.

"The slow collapse of Medicare, Social Security, and other entitlement programs threatens to cut every senior's benefits, raise every worker's payroll taxes, and bankrupt America-and it will all occur on the next president's watch. We want to help you avoid this national nightmare," write Cooper and Wolf in the letter, which was mailed last Friday. "We write today to let you know that if you win, we have the perfect gift for you. It's a lasting solution to the long-term spending problem-the biggest you will face as president."

Cooper and Wolf describe the 16-member, bipartisan "commission with teeth" and urge the candidates to lend it their support. "By running for president in 2008 you have volunteered to stop the treacherous decline in U.S. financial strength," they write. "The American people deserve to know the extent of the financial straits we face. It will be your job to stem the tide, and we believe this commission is the answer."

The bipartisan Cooper-Wolf SAFE Commission Act was introduced in September with support from U.S. Comptroller General David Walker, the Concord Coalition, the Brookings Institution, the Heritage Foundation and the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget. In the weeks since its introduction, the Cooper-Wolf bill has been endorsed in principle by House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer and has garnered praise from New York Times columnist David Brooks and Washington Post columnist Robert Samuelson.

The bill

would create a balanced, 16-member panel comprised of the White House OMB Director and Treasury Secretary; four members appointed by the Senate Majority Leader and four appointed by the Speaker of the House; three appointed by the House Minority Leader and three appointed by the Senate Minority Leader. No more than four Members of Congress could sit on the commission. It would be tasked with holding town hall meetings around the country and then submitting a report that balances long-term spending and revenue scenarios for the nation. If Congressional leaders fail to introduce their own proposal, the SAFE Commission's legislative proposal is automatically brought to the House floor. If passed, it is sent to the Senate for similarly expedited consideration.

"Please support prompt passage of the Cooper-Wolf bill so that the commission can report back in time," the letter to presidential candidates concludes. "Our gift is not just for you, but for America. It's a life raft that's big enough for all of us."

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What others are saying about the SAFE Commission Act:

Roberts
Samuelson, Newsweek/Washington Post: Escaping
the Budget Impasse

"It would be revealing if some of the hopefuls-Democrats and Republicans-would show that they grasp this by providing their endorsements."

David
Brooks, New York Times: The
Entitlements People

USA
Today: Social
Security Hits First Wave of Boomers

House
Majority Leader Steny Hoyer: Fighting
for America's Future

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