

SAFE Commission bill. It is a bipartisan process.

The legislation text protects the minority by requiring a supermajority, 12 of 16 of the commission's members, to be in agreement before any legislative recommendations are sent to Congress for an up-or-down vote. I do not believe that minority Members are likely to be appointed to this type of commission by the Republican leadership. PAUL RYAN, ranking member on the House Budget Committee, and DAVE CAMP, ranking member of the House Ways and Means Committee, they would not waiver in their opposition to tax increases. To say that this would bring about tax increases, it is wrong.

Senator GREGG underscored this point during consideration of the Conrad-Gregg amendment. Senator GREGG said, "One presumes that whoever goes on this task force, if chosen by the leaders of their party in the Senate, whether Senator REID or Senator MCCONNELL, or leaders of the party in the House, Ms. PELOSI or Mr. BOEHNER, is going to reflect fairly aggressively the viewpoints and philosophies of the different parts. It will be a bipartisan report, or it will not be a report at all. Then it comes to the Congress, and has to be voted up or down by a supermajority. Once again, it basically moots the ability to game it. One side can't game the other. The proposal must be bipartisan and fair."

In short, without Republican support, any attempt to raise taxes would never see the light of day on the House floor. The SAFE bill was carefully crafted to ensure a bipartisan process and to protect the rights of the minority party.

Given the enormity of the challenge, the commission needs to be able to look at every component of our fiscal policy to fairly assess where we stand and how we can best move toward a sound financial future. In looking at revenues, the legislative language is clear that any changes in the Tax Code must help simplify the system and stimulate increased economic growth and, thereby, tax revenue. But what no one is saying is that by opposing the commission concept altogether, and failing to put forward any viable alternative, those who most adamantly oppose tax increases essentially ensure they will happen down the road.

The issue is that if we don't do something now about the deficit, the debts that continue to mount at record levels will guarantee tax increases in the future. The longer it takes to address this issue, the more draconian the options will be when Congress is forced, which they will most surely be, to change course.

I have repeatedly challenged colleagues on both sides of the aisle who question the SAFE Commission to come up with another solution to the deficit and debt crisis that can pass Congress.

Without a special process like the SAFE Commission, which is based on the successful Federal base-closing

process, I am convinced Congress will never put a mechanism in place to control government spending.

Quite frankly, both parties have failed to face up to the entitlement challenges in recent years. Given the enormity of the country's financial turmoil, I remain convinced that the bold steps needed to control deficit spending will never be taken through regular order in a Congress that is so politically controlled by special interests. Our entire political system is now so polarized that many only think in terms of red or blue ideology at the expense of a shared national interest.

Time is growing short. If lawmakers are serious about the debt and the deficit, issues that Americans are increasingly worried about, Congress will halt the budget gimmicks, the slick talking points, and muster the political will to have an honest conversation with the American people about where we are, where we are headed, and what changes need to be made to get us back on track.

□ 1645

That is what the SAFE Commission-like process is all about, a national conversation. The people of this country deserve an honest assessment about their Federal Government's future government savings account and check-book, a discussion driven not by politics but by statesmanship. The American people deserve a discussion which elevates the Nation's sights.

The consequences of inaction are simply too great to put this issue on hold and rely on a fake commission. We need a process that will produce measurable results, a process that will foster a renaissance in the country, will allow us to honestly tell our children that the foundation of America that they are inheriting is just as strong and just as promising as the America that our parents left us. I long to be able to tell my five children and my 15 grandchildren that that is the case.

Abraham Lincoln, one of our Nation's most admired and greatest Presidents once said, "You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today." Yet that is exactly what Congress is poised to do if it fails to act.

In closing, Madam Speaker, nearly 4 years ago I visited the site of George Washington's crossing the Delaware River in anticipation of the Battle of Trenton. The iconic scene is depicted in the painting which hangs in the west wing of the White House. Washington was down to only 3,000 soldiers, and the cause of liberty looked to be headed for defeat. Yet with great courage and sacrifice, Washington and his forces were successful in changing the direction of the American Revolution, and therefore the course of history.

Their legacy is a rich one, and it is ours. If we are mindful of this legacy, of the sacrifices of so many previous generations of Americans, I believe we will move to take action. I believe that

we will rise in our midst, profiles in courage. I believe we will make the sacrifices necessary for the betterment of this country.

I close with the words of Washington himself, the cautionary words from his 1796 farewell address. He said, "We should avoid ungenerously throwing upon posterity the burden of what we ourselves ought to bear." Indeed, this is our burden to bear. I ask my colleagues, will we falter under its weight or rise above it as befitting this great Nation?

And with that, Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. GUTERREZ (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for today and February 3 on account of personal business.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. KAGEN) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Ms. WOOLSEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. KAGEN, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. KAPTUR, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. MCHENRY) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. POE of Texas, for 5 minutes, February 11.

Mr. JONES, for 5 minutes, February 11.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. GINGREY of Georgia, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. BRUN of Georgia, for 5 minutes, today.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. WOLF. Madam Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 4 o'clock and 48 minutes p.m.), the House adjourned until tomorrow, Friday, February 5, 2010, at 9 a.m.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 2 of Rule XXIV, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

6006. A letter from the Chief Counsel, FEMA, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Suspension of Community Eligibility [Docket No.: FEMA-8053] received January 7, 2010, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Financial Services.