

SUPPORT FOR THE SAFE  
COMMISSION**HON. FRANK R. WOLF**

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, March 5, 2007*

Mr. WOLF. Madam Speaker, earlier this year I 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.

I submit for the RECORD an op-ed by Dr. Ed Feulner, President of the Heritage Foundation. Dr. Feulner believes that the SAFE Commission provides an opportunity to address this looming crisis. This legislation can provide a path toward a safe and secure economy for generations to come—a renaissance for America.

This legislation will be good for the future of America.

[From the Sun Times, Feb. 28, 2007]

WE NEED A NEW COMMISSION TO TACKLE  
ENTITLEMENT PROGRAMS

(By Ed Feulner)

In any policy battle, it helps to have allies. So it's good that AARP seems finally ready to help press for reform of entitlements such as Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid.

AARP's shift can be seen in its latest TV ad, "Future Champions." It shows children stressing the need to "find real long-term solutions to some of America's most pressing issues—health care and long-term financial security."

The ad is misleading in some ways. Speaking about entitlements, one boy asks, "Will we keep those promises?" when, of course, this child has made no promises. In fact, the big three entitlement programs are promises made by older generations—to give themselves benefits that younger workers will have to pay for through ever-rising payroll taxes.

But the overall message of the ad is that we need to make some big changes to fix entitlements. That's a refreshing change from two years ago. Back then, when President Bush was urging the creation of individual retirement accounts within Social Security, AARP's ads insisted, "If you had a problem with the kitchen sink, you wouldn't tear down the entire house," hinting that entitlement problems weren't all that bad.

But the organization now seems to understand that the country's on the verge of a fiscal catastrophe.

The Congressional Budget Office predicts that spending on Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid will soar from just over 8 percent of GDP today to almost 19 percent in 2050, when the cute children in today's TV ads will be middle-aged parents. Their bill will be gigantic: \$38 trillion to pay for the Social Security and Medicare benefits their parents have promised themselves—but not arranged to pay for. Add in the national debt and other entitlements, and it works out to \$440,000 for every household in the United

States today—enough to buy each of those families a new home. Or two.

So how can we fix things? Well, as we learned in the debate over Social Security, we can't simply take on one problem at a time. If we try to reform just one of the big programs, some group will always fight for the status quo. We need to fix all three at once.

Also, we need to give lawmakers some cover. To accomplish that, Congress should form a commission such as the one Rep. Frank Wolf (R-Va.) proposed last year. Wolf would label it "SAFE," for "Securing America's Future Economy." It would have 16 voting members, including at least four members of Congress, the director of the Office of Management and Budget and the secretary of the Treasury.

The commission would be bipartisan and have one year to develop plans to:

Fix the imbalance between long-term federal spending promises and projected revenues.

Boost national savings to spur domestic investment and economic growth.

Simplify the budget process to place greater emphasis on long-term fiscal issues.

The first thing the commission would do is leave Washington and discuss reform options with Americans. That should help it avoid the temptation to hatch some scheme behind closed committee-room doors. Plus, the members would surely find, as the Heritage Foundation has with our ongoing Fiscal Wake-Up Tour, a real desire out there to fix entitlement programs.

Once it reports to Congress, lawmakers would be required to hold a simple up-or-down vote on each of its recommendations. This should help break the legislative logjam. Just as base-closing commissions enabled lawmakers to shutter obsolete military bases (even those in their own districts or states), a SAFE Commission would help lawmakers make necessary changes without being accused of "destroying" entitlement programs.

Many of us over 50 realize that our generation, however inadvertently, created the coming entitlement crisis, and we understand it's up to us to solve it. AARP will be a welcome ally—if we can believe their ads. Establishing a SAFE Commission should help us find out.

SUPPORTING THE GOALS AND  
IDEALS OF A NATIONAL MEDAL  
OF HONOR DAY

SPEECH OF

**HON. SILVESTRE REYES**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, February 27, 2007*

Mr. REYES. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H. Con. Res. 47, observing National Medal of Honor Day and honoring the sacrifices of Medal of Honor recipients and their contributions to our Nation. March 25th is an appropriate day to recognize these individuals, since the first Medal of Honor was awarded on March 25, 1863.

This resolution not only salutes the bravery of Medal of Honor recipients, but also gives the American public the opportunity to learn about the history of this prestigious military distinction and the uncommon acts of courage that made recipients real-life heroes.

Previous honorees include several El Pasoans. Staff Sergeant Ambrosio Guillen was posthumously awarded the Medal of

Honor for going above and beyond the call of duty during the Korean War. Sergeant Guillen sacrificed his life in order to thwart an enemy attack, saving the lives of the men in his platoon. He was laid to rest at Fort Bliss National Cemetery.

Colonel Joseph C. Rodriguez was also awarded the Medal of Honor for his courageous actions in the Korean War. While facing a barrage of hostile fire and improbable odds, Colonel Rodriguez secured a strategic stronghold by killing 15 enemy soldiers occupying well-fortified positions. He later moved to El Paso following his retirement from the Army and served as Facilities Director at the University of Texas at El Paso for over 10 years.

Most recently, on April 4, 2005, Army Sergeant First Class Paul Ray Smith was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for his "extraordinary heroism and uncommon valor" while repelling an enemy attack on a prisoner of war holding area during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Sergeant Smith quickly organized two Army platoons to defend their position. In the face of enemy fire, Smith manned a .50 caliber machine gun mounted on a damaged armored vehicle. Although exposed to enemy gunfire, Sergeant Smith maintained his position. His heroism resulted in the death of over 50 enemy soldiers before Sergeant Smith was mortally wounded during this courageous act.

As a Vietnam veteran, I recognize the importance of honoring these selfless acts of courage. In order to preserve their legacy and costly sacrifices, I proudly stand in support of our Medal of Honor recipients.

HONORING READ ACROSS  
AMERICA**HON. NICK J. RAHALL II**

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, March 5, 2007*

Mr. RAHALL. Madam Speaker, in May 1997, a small reading task force at National Education Association came up with a big idea. "Let's create a day to celebrate reading," the group decided. "We hold pep rallies to get kids excited about football—why don't we do something to get kids excited about reading? We'll call it 'NEA's Read Across America' and we'll celebrate it on Dr. Seuss's birthday." And so was born on March 2, 1998, the largest celebration of reading this country has ever seen.

To commemorate this special day, I recently joined third-graders at Coal City Elementary and read to them some of Dr. Seuss' more famous stories, including *The Cat in the Hat*, which marks its 50th anniversary this year. As always, it was a joy to spend some time with the students and their instructors, Sandra Snuffer, Donna Thomas and Janet Smith. I was inspired by the students' interest in learning, and encouraged by our educators' dedication to teaching them the importance of literacy.

Of course, as we all know, just as reading should not be confined to our classrooms, neither should our efforts to encourage literacy be confined to one single day of the year. As President Bill Clinton once said, "Literacy is not a luxury, it is a right and a responsibility. If our world is to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century we must harness the energy and creativity of all our citizens."

It's hard to believe, but 20 percent of the people you see during the course of a day cannot read, according to most recent statistics. In the Third District of West Virginia, this average is even higher, at 24 percent. This is a startling statistic that needs to change and we are deeply indebted to the organizations that devote themselves to this important cause—organizations like the Literacy West Virginia, which has councils in all of West Virginia's 55 counties. On February 21, I had the opportunity to meet with the Tri-State Literacy Council and its director Dee George at the Cabell County Library to discuss the great strides the organization is making in adult education.

I am proud of my record of support for literacy programs and initiatives. Time and again I have opposed budget proposals from this Administration that would cut funding to important literacy programs which are intended to assist families break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy. And I will continue to fight policies that undermine the hard work so many are doing to improve reading levels in the Mountain State.

I have also again contacted my colleagues on the Appropriations Committee in Congress urging them to provide \$25 million in federal funds to the Reading Is Fundamental Inexpensive Book Distribution Program (RIF), allowing this important literacy initiative to continue operating at its current level. As the Nation's largest children's literacy organization, RIF last year provided more than 16 million new books free of charge to nearly 4.5 million of the nation's most underserved children in all fifty states.

Literacy is the gateway to educational excellence and a key to success in our society. On Read Aloud Day, let us recommit to helping improve the lives of the men, women, and children in West Virginia and across America who cannot read.

Because with literacy, to borrow from the great Dr. Seuss himself:

You have brains in your head.  
You have feet in your shoes  
You can steer yourself  
any direction you choose.

TRIBUTE TO MS. C. "JEANNE"  
TIMMONS

**HON. BOB FILNER**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, March 5, 2007*

Mr. FILNER. Madam Speaker, earlier this month the United States Coast Guard and the entire Coast Guard community lost a great friend and colleague with the retirement of Ms. C. "Jeanne" Timmons.

Jeanne began her incredible career with the United States Government in May 1963, when she became a staffer to Congressman Victor Wickersham from her home State of Oklahoma. Over the next 26 years in the U.S. House of Representatives, she worked for Congressman Jack Flynt, Congressman Bob Sikes, Congressman Earl Hutto, and the House Coast Guard Subcommittee.

In July 1989, Jeanne left the House to begin a new career with the United States Coast Guard, where she was able to utilize her expertise and passion to enhance recreational

boating programs in our Nation. Her tenure with the Coast Guard has included various positions, all related to recreational boating safety. She has worked as a State Grant Regional Coordinator, the Chief of the State Affairs Branch, a Program Analyst, the Chief of the Program Management Division, and finally the Executive Director of the National Boating Safety Advisory Council.

Throughout her career, Jeanne's invaluable knowledge and experience were a tremendous asset to Congress, the Coast Guard, and to the boating community as a whole. I take this opportunity to commend and thank Jeanne for her years of service in the United States Government and wish her good health and good luck in her future endeavors.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE OCCASION OF THE SCHOMBURG CENTER FOR RESEARCH IN BLACK CULTURE 80TH ANNIVERSARY AFRICANA HERITAGE AWARDS GALA

**HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, March 5, 2007*

Mr. RANGEL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the Schomburg Center For Research in Black Culture for hosting the 80th Anniversary Africana Heritage Awards Gala, in which 13 living legends were honored and to enter into the record an article from the Africana Heritage newsletter entitled "80th Anniversary Gala Pays Tribute to 13 Living Legends."

On October 6, 2006, the Schomburg Center For Research in Black Culture, which is a community treasure, recognized and honored Black achievement by paying tribute to living legends Maya Angelou, Chinua Achebe, Clarence Avant, Harry Belafonte, Elizabeth Catlett, Aime Cesaire, Ruby Dee, John Hope Franklin, William Greaves, Ernest Kaiser, Don Newcombe, Herman J. Russell, and Percy Sutton. The legends have made significant contributions to African American history and culture in areas such as law, business, acting, music, filmmaking, poetry, and sports. Each honoree was presented with a Heritage Award statuette. I was honored to present an award to Percy Sutton.

The well organized gala was attended by over 1,000 people. Honorees and guest enjoyed music and poetry performed by the Eli Fountain Percussion Discussion Ensemble, Angelique Kidjo, Kaissa, Kayo, Avery Brooks, and Phylcia Rashad. Dinner was also served. The gala marked a historical moment for the Schomburg Center. The honorary chairs for the gala including myself were President Bill Clinton, Senator HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON, David Dinkins, Catherine C. Marron, and Paul LeClerc.

The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, which is located in Harlem, is a part of the New York Public Library. It was named after black scholar Arturo Alfonso Schomburg in 1940 and in 1972 was designated as a Research Library within the New York Public Library.

It contains an immeasurable wealth of information in the form of manuscripts, rare books, archives, art, photographs, oral history record-

ings, motion pictures, and videotapes relative to global African and African diasporan experiences.

I have introduced legislation, H. Con. Res. 57, to recognize the Schomburg Center for Research and Black Culture for educating the people of the United States about the African-American migration experience, and for other purposes.

[From the African Heritage Newsletter]

80TH ANNIVERSARY GALA PAYS TRIBUTE TO 13 LIVING LEGENDS

Legends came to life for the nearly one thousand guests gathered at Frederick P. Rose Hall, Home of Jazz at Lincoln Center for the Schomburg Center's 80th Anniversary Africana Heritage Awards Gala, on Friday, October 6, 2006. Chaired by Billye S. Aaron and Sherry B. Bronfman, the Gala Honorary Chairs included President William Jefferson Clinton, Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton, Congressman Charles B. Rangel, The Honorable David N. Dinkins, Chairman of the Board, The New York Public Library Catherine C. Marron, and President and CEO, The New York Public Library Dr. Paul LeClerc.

One of the most memorable evenings in the Center and New York's cultural history, the event honored an extraordinary group of 13 individuals, whose careers and lives have had an immeasurable impact on African-American and American culture. The honorees included author, poet, dancer, actress, and director, Maya Angelou; author and scholar, Chinua Achebe; music executive and producer, Clarence Avant; singer, actor, and activist, Harry Belafonte; sculptress and printmaker, Elizabeth Catlett; author, poet, and playwright, Aimé Césaire; actress, writer, activist, Ruby Dee; historian and author, John Hope Franklin; filmmaker and producer, William Greaves; librarian, bibliographer, and editor, Ernest Kaiser; athlete and community leader, Don Newcombe; entrepreneur and civic leader, Herman J. Russell; and lawyer, activist, political and communications leader, Percy Sutton.

The evening began with a VIP reception at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel for the award recipients and major donors, and continued at the Frederick P. Rose Hall with: a cocktail reception in the Atrium, tribute program in The Rose Theater, and a post-tribute dinner in the Allen Room. At the Mandarin, many of the honorees gathered and mingled with distinguished guests including the Gala Co-Chairs Billye Aaron and Sherry Bronfman; Honorary Chairs Congressman Charles B. Rangel and The Honorable David N. Dinkins; and Vice Chairs Hank Aaron, Joyce Dinkins, Evem Cooper Epps, president of the UPS Foundation and vice president of its Corporate Relations, Ingrid Saunders Jones, senior vice president of The Coca-Cola Company and chair of the Coca-Cola Foundation, and The Honorable Andrew J. Young; along with New York City Council Speaker Christine Quinn, President and CEO of Major League Baseball Bob DuPuy, actor Danny Glover, and author Walter Mosley. Entertained by Saleem Waters, the group also included poet Sonia Sanchez, author Walter Mosley, NYU Professor Manthia Diawara, Essence Magazine Editorial Director Susan L. Taylor, and New York Assemblyman Keith L.T. Wright.

The tribute program in the Rose Theater began with a prelude of songs spanning 80 years to mirror the center's and the honorees' lifetimes by Eli Fountain Percussion Discussion Ensemble, featuring musicians Lyndon Achee, Alex Blake, Brian Carrot, Miles Dalto, Roland Guerreo, Phoenix Rivera, William Smith, Marc Taylor, and special guest artist Patato Valdez on the congas. Program hosts, actors Avery Brooks