

Testimony of Ryan Schoenike
Young Americans for Federal Debt Awareness
National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform
Public Hearing - June 30, 2010

Members of the commission - First let me say thank you for the opportunity to present today. My name is Ryan Schoenike from Young Americans for Federal Debt Awareness and we have a website called WeCantPayThatTab.org, which is solely dedicated to educating and engaging young Americans in the federal debt.

Like many people my age we are concerned about the consequences of the debt burden being placed on us by today's policymakers, so we were encouraged to learn that the president had created this commission. However, we were very disappointed to see that the commission is primarily made up of people who will not be obligated with paying back our massive debt. As evident in 2008, politicians are more than willing to engage young Americans in grass roots movements to get themselves elected, but when it comes to engaging young Americans in actual policy decisions the effort is absent.

We started WeCantPayThatTab.org out of frustration over politicians throwing around billions and trillions like they were nickels and dimes and the constant lack of urgency referring to those obligated to pay for our debt as the children and grandchildren, as if they hadn't been born yet. When in fact it is my generation, those in their 20's who will first be burdened with the debt you are creating.

This commission is the perfect arena for politicians to begin to involve those who are obligated to pay for this debt. We hope the commission will seriously consider holding another hearing focused on the input of young Americans. Because if we are going to have pay this debt back we ought to have say in how it's done.

For my generation the American dream is seriously in jeopardy. 50 to 60% percent taxes, trillion dollar a year interest payments and out of control federal budgets are no joke. I doubt many of you would be here today if you faced those obstacles as you started your adult life. Our opinion needs to be heard and in fact you need our help.

Any solution you come up with is going to have to be long term. The hardest part of your task might not be coming up with the solution but communicating it to the American people. And it's only by working together that we can hope to put this nation on a sustainable fiscal path.

The path toward fiscal sustainability is going to take leadership on both of our parts. Our part will be to take our knowledge of the generation we are a part of and effectively educate and engage them. Your part will be to take on the leadership roles you were elected to do by making the tough decisions, getting beyond the bitter partisan politics that have become common place,

and making a decision for the good of the whole and not the individual. We look forward for the opportunity to work with on a solution. Thank you for your time.