

Testimony from Yoni Gruskin and Caroline Matthews, Concerned Youth of America

Chairman Bowles, Chairman Simpson, members of the President's Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, my name is Yoni Gruskin and this is my colleague Caroline Matthews. We represent Concerned Youth of America, a non-partisan grassroots organization that educates this country's youth about the perilous fiscal course of this country and its consequences for our generation. Our network extends to college campuses in over 20 states, representing nearly 1,400 young people. Today we are here to speak for them, but more broadly, we are here to speak on behalf of the millennials, the generation of 80 million Americans who find their futures endangered by runaway deficits and interest costs. We are here to lend a voice for the members of our ambitious, earnest, hardworking generation, who will leave school with an uncertain future and the misfortune of paying the bills for the work of previous generations of politicians and voters.

We are not here to discuss the size and scope of the government, or to prescribe specific policy recommendations. Rather, it is our duty to remind you all of the American ideal that each generation should inherit a better standard of living than their parents, that through the American ethos of hard work and fair play, we can dream to reach higher levels of prosperity. But as you all know by now, the scary charts and numbers that get circulated around your meetings ensure that we will be stuck paying more to receive less. Soon, 20 cents of every dollar we pay in taxes will not go towards building highways or schools or a 21st century defense structure; that money will go straight into the pockets of our creditors in the form of interest payments.

This is not fair, this is not right, and quite simply, this is not American. You, the chosen representatives of President Obama's commission, have the ability to change our course. You all have the opportunity to restore our social compact; to renew a devotion to intergenerational equality and to let us believe once again that tomorrow can be better than today.

The work before you is not easy. In fact, I can assure you that you have only done your job properly if everybody in this country, on both sides of the aisle, strongly despises each and every one of you. Your work is essential, and we applaud your patriotic efforts to tackle these gargantuan problems. On behalf of an entire generation, we would like to thank you for your work, and encourage you to keep us in mind as you craft your recommendations.