

Robby Stern, President

Puget Sound Alliance for Retired Americans

On behalf of the Puget Sound Alliance for Retired Americans, an organization of approximately one thousand individual and organizational members, I am making the following comments:

The Commission should find solutions to the fiscal deficit by honestly looking at the real causes of the present deficit. These causes include: the costs of two wars; the tax breaks that have been provided to the wealthy people in our country; the huge dollars that were provided to the banks and investment houses of our country from the tax revenue generated primarily by the working people of our country; and the costs of a broken health care system that costs too much and delivers too little to the people of our country.

The problem is not Social Security. As you know, Social Security has a dedicated source of revenue and the Social Security Trust Fund has a very significant surplus from which the Congress has borrowed to fund the wars, the tax breaks, and the bail outs. These dollars were paid by working people to assure that they would have a reliable and sufficient source of income when they retire or when it is needed for survivor children or disability. It is immoral to look to cuts in Social Security as a way to pay down the deficit. To be clear, raising the retirement age is a cut and failing to pay cost of living increases is also a cut. The people on this Commission know that a simple way to assure payment, at the present level, of benefits from the Social Security Trust Fund beyond 2037 is to eliminate the \$106,800 cap and require that all income earners pay the Social Security tax on the entirety of their income rather than giving a tax break to high income earners. The Puget Sound Alliance for Retired Americans believes that cuts in Social Security to reduce the deficit is tantamount to stealing from the American people in order to support the wealthy and corporate interests in our country and we will do everything we can to stop this theft.

With regard to Medicare and Medicaid, the Puget Sound Alliance for Retired Americans would have preferred a Single Payer solution to our health care crisis, in other words Medicare for all. However, we supported the reforms that were passed related to Medicare and Medicaid. We believe that the new health care reform law, and particularly the Medicare and Medicaid provisions should be given the opportunity to work. Any deficit reduction proposal from the Commission should not in any way propose cutting either of these programs.

We would urge the Commission to engage in a transparent process and hold hearing around the country so that you can hear what people are thinking. You should not allow yourselves to be captured in the "beltway mentality". You have an ethical and moral obligation to hold accountable those who are responsible for the present economic recession/depression. You have an obligation not to increase the terrible disparity between the wealthy in this country and the rest of the population.