



Kaw Blue Communiqué

Volume No. 16 **EXTRA EDITION**

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Judy Grossnickle, Kaw Blue Communiqué Editor.

This special edition is being published because **The National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform** published its report, entitled, “**The Moment of Truth**” on December 1, 2010. *In February 2010, President Obama signed an executive order establishing the bipartisan National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform. The 18-member commission was tasked with producing policy recommendations that will reduce the deficit and control the long-term growth in the national debt. Policy recommendations were to be delivered to the president no later than December 1, 2010. A vote of 14 commission members is required to send a set of recommendations to the president. However, a smaller number of commission members can join together to release recommendations or policy suggestions if there is no formal agreed-upon recommendation.* We all agree that our country is in deep debt and needs to find a way back to solvency. Our Congresses of the past have done a great job of deficit spending. Now it is time to review our budget and to reduce our debt. The question before this Commission was to determine the ways and means to do this. I’m sure that many of you (I know I’m one) are glad that the job was theirs and not ours. I’m sure that many of us in our current jobs or past jobs had the difficult task of figuring out how to reduce our budget either through drastic budget cuts of supplies, personnel, operating methods, or non critical tasks. Although the cuts are necessary, it is unpleasant and sometimes hard to live with.

Some of the Commissions recommendations impact us as Federal Employees and Retired Federal Employees. Our best recommendation is that you read the Report (66 pages) and make your own assessment. Because you are a NARFE member you can go to the Kansas NARFE Website at http://ksnarfe.org/NARFE%20HQ%20FORMS/TheMomentofTruth12_1_2010.pdf (No logon is needed.) Then you will know the unbiased whole truth about the report and will be able to formulate the best

course of action for you to take. You can let your Congressional representatives know your views so that they may take them into consideration when these recommendations come up for debate and vote in Congress.

Below are three views expressed by members of NARFE.

Dick McChesney, Legislative Chairman

You probably know the final report of the **National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform** was released December 1. It called for cuts in Federal spending by \$70 billion over 10 years, a shift in health care premium costs to the Federal retirees, freezing Federal employees pay and a 10% reduction in the Federal work force. On December 3rd, the 18 members of the Commission voted on the report. Eleven voted in favor, with 7 voting against, with 14 favorable votes needed to be referred to the Congress for a ye or no vote. **DON'T BELIEVE THIS ENDS THERE!** Bills will be introduced on some of the Commission's recommendations. Also, the Administration will/has proposed some of these recommendations. (Example: On December 1 President Obama announced a 2 year pay freeze on all civilian employees.)

National NARFE responds immediately to any risk of reducing Federal employee and retiree benefits. For example, on December 1st and 3rd when the final report was released they issued Legislative Hotline messages and prepared letters for we members to send electronically to our Senators and Representative Jenkins. They also furnished a NARFE toll free number, 1-866-220-0044, and a suggested message for us to call the above voicing our opposition to reducing our earned benefits. National NARFE Officers and staff contact influencing members in Congress. However, as good a job as they do, the real influence on legislators are their constituents. That is why we must follow the lead National NARFE provides and send these prepared letters electronically, make the telephone calls and personal contacts to have a fighting chance of retaining our earned benefits.

Our chapter needs to have the best way to notify our members to immediately contact our legislators. One thing done this time was Judy Grossnickle e-mailed the 63 who are receiving the chapter newsletter by e-mail, asking them to send the December 1st or 3rd electronic letter to Senators Roberts, Brownback and Congresswoman Jenkins. All of us who have internet need to be on the Global Electronic Messaging System (GEMS) . Though GEMS, NARFE Legislative Hotlines are received almost weekly and special issues are automatically sent out by e-mail. It is the best way to stay informed and take action as National

NARFE suggests. Please, don't rely on someone else to do what you and I should be doing to protect our earned benefits.

Dan Clawson, Member *who is dropping his membership because of his interpretation "of the NARFE's positions as consistently self serving with no indication of any acceptance that federal employees and retirees are a segment of the American population."*

The report of the Joint Commission entitled, "The Moment of Truth" is a jumping off point for this society to DO SOMETHING CONSTRUCTIVE about an unbelievable debt problem. I pulled my copy from the KS NARFE (National Association of Active and Retired Federal Employees) website – unfortunately, that organization blasts the potential impacts on their members alone, asking for congressional pounding in opposition to any sharing of the load to members.

AARP also bombarded folks with their version of "everyone but us".

I offer that the debt load is real, it is unsustainable, and it must be addressed. EVERYONE will have to share in fixing it, and in KEEPING it fixed.

The approaches offered by other organizations are more likely to start the debt reduction process than the mass rush of self-serving organizations to make it "everyone but us". We can do this with planning and foresight, or we can enjoy our version of the Greek approach.

Adulthood either sucks or challenges us – I like to think challenge is a better option.

**E-mail correspondence between Richard Thissen, Regional Vice President
and NARFE Headquarters**

From: Richard Thissen
Sent: Wednesday, December 01, 2010 6:33 PM
To: Joseph Beaudoin; Daniel Adcock
Subject: Commission Report

Joe, Report is even worse than we had supposed. The paragraph on federal retiree health care is very scary; looks like they are throwing out in the cold (hopefully this will be for new retirees). The paragraph on medi-gap plans is also very devastating; deductibles and co-pays even if you have a supplement.

I have downloaded Commission Report from the internet and sent to all my Federations and they have forwarded on from there.

Recommend we post report on the web-site.
Dick

From: [Daniel Adcock](#)
To: [Richard Thissen](#)
Sent: Thursday, December 02, 2010 8:13 AM
Subject: RE: Commission Report

Dick:

I understand that you contacted Joe about the proposal in the December 1 final report of the Fiscal Commission regarding the proposals to shift an increasingly higher share of FEHBP premiums to retirees through providing them a fixed-rate voucher in lieu of the government/employer contribution provided under current law. That's something we covered in yesterday's hotline and is also part of the cover letter and email being sent to lawmakers through the Legislative Action Center. Sarah Holstine is currently performing some analysis that will give us an estimate of how much more retirees would pay for their share of FEHBP premiums under the proposal. We'll get that out once it is finalized.

Dan

From: Richard Thissen
Sent: Thursday, December 02, 2010 9:17 AM
To: Daniel Adcock
Subject: Re: Commission Report

Dan, The thing that concerns me is that they are now separating. As I read the paragraph it says voucher for employees to help pay for FEHBP and then it specifically differentiates retirees in that their voucher will be to help pay for Medicare. This is the beginning of what we always feared; separation of the "groups".

----- Original Message -----

From: [Daniel Adcock](#)

To: [Richard Thissen](#)

Sent: Thursday, December 02, 2010 8:27 AM

Subject: RE: Commission Report

Dick: I think you are correct regarding your instincts about lawmakers trying to divide and conquer through proposal that affect retirees and workers separately, but the fiscal commission proposal would creating an inequity on the share the government pays toward premiums, but does not appear to separately rate premiums rates for workers and retirees. In other words, the total premium for retirees and workers would be the same, but over time, retirees would pay an increasingly larger share while the percentage paid by workers would remain at about 30 percent. We dealt with similar indexing proposals during the 1990s - the difference then was they applied to all enrollees and now the commission has specifically targeted retirees. Yes, very disturbing. Dan

Finals words from Judy Grossnickle, Editor

I hope the views of the previous NARFE members will help you to determine for yourselves the best course of action for you to take. I again urge you to read "The Moment of Truth" by the National Commission of Fiscal Responsibility and Reform. I believe that it is important that we read the document for ourselves, talk with and evaluate the opinions of others for example: our colleagues; friends; and family, formulate our opinions, and then express our opinions to our Congressional Representatives. Our **EARNED** benefits are dear to us and our economic stability. Yes, we must help our country to become solvent and out of debt. I believe that the burden must be shared by everyone across the board: young, old, retired, employed, rich, poor, businesses & owners, infirm, healthy, Democrat or Republican. And Congress should not exempt themselves. Please remember that past Congresses voted to implement deficit spending and they will vote on the bills to reduce the current debt. Will our representatives in Congress vote in conjunction with your views if you don't voice your opinion?

You can leave it alone (do nothing); you can bitch about it; or you can write, call or e-mail your representatives and expression your opinion. Make a decision, what's it worth to you?