

Opening Remarks

Chairman Arrington, Ranking Member Boyle, and members of the Budget Committee, thank you for inviting me to testify before you today.

I am encouraged by the recent public support for a Fiscal Commission that would address the fiscal challenges our nation faces, and it's a privilege to provide insights from my time as House Budget Committee Chairman and Co-chairman of the Joint Select Committee on Budget and Appropriations Process Reform.

As everyone here is aware, one of the biggest challenges we face as a nation right now is our \$33 trillion sovereign debt. It is one of the greatest threats to American prosperity, security, and the economic success of future generations.

We have not meaningfully addressed the real driver of our debts and deficits – mandatory spending. Congress has taken strides in controlling discretionary spending, but that can only take us so far, and the truth is, it still would not be enough.

Mandatory spending accounts for nearly 73% of federal spending. Seventy-three percent.

It is way past time to say enough is enough and have Members of Congress take the tough votes that will strike at the scourge of mandatory spending.

Without reform, the trust funds for Medicare and Social Security will face insolvency by 2031 and 2033 respectively. Congress must prioritize the reform of our mandatory spending programs in a way that addresses the spending these programs incur while preserving them for future generations.

We need to tackle the fiscal dysfunction, and I believe a fiscal commission would help deliver the needed policy solutions to

chart a responsible way forward in addressing our spending problem.

Now, that being said, we need to remember, the process is not the problem, the problem is the problem.

We already have two bodies dedicated to solving our spending problem – the House and Senate Budget Committees.

I want to commend you, Chairman Arrington, for producing a budget for Fiscal Year 2024. I appreciate your leadership and hope it will help spur some of our reluctant members along.

As members of the Joint Select Committee on Budget and Appropriations Process, Chairman Arrington and I saw firsthand the desire of members on both sides of the aisle in both chambers of Congress to improve the nation's fiscal outlook.

We ultimately produced a bipartisan package of reforms, including moving to a biennial budget, while maintaining annual appropriations and annual reconciliation; ensuring realistic deadlines for Congress to complete its budget and appropriations work; and requiring a joint Budget Committee hearing on the fiscal state of the nation.

The Committee obtained bipartisan and bicameral support for a number of proposals, but the final vote did not reach the required supermajority threshold. Some members voted “no” and some “present.”

However, the final proposal was developed with input from all the Members, the Co-Chair agreed to the base text, and additional amendments were added during the markup with a supermajority vote – some with a unanimous vote. Bipartisan ideas were found, and those proposals should continue to be explored by future reformers.

From the minute I was appointed by Speaker Ryan, my goal was for our Committee to be bipartisan in everything we did. I think any successful commission will need to focus on bipartisanship as well.

While the Committee did not ultimately achieve success, I believe by taking the time to evaluate the efforts of past committees, such as mine, Congress can establish a Commission that is able to address the fiscal challenges of today and establish economic stability for the future generations of tomorrow.

Some other suggestions I'd offer for a fiscal commission include requiring a bipartisan supermajority for the recommendations to be reported, expedited legislative procedures in the Senate, and the mandate to look at EVERYTHING – mandatory spending, revenues, discretionary spending – EVERYTHING.

Thank you again for inviting me to testify today. I look forward to a productive discussion.