

America's Financial Bleeding Has to Stop

The News & Advance

Published: November 15, 2009

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Rep. Frank Wolf, a Northern Virginia Republican congressman who represents the 10th District in the House of Representatives, is not a politician who's prone to hyperbole.

He's not a far right-winger who believes Barack Obama isn't a natural-born U.S. citizen, ineligible to be president. He isn't a Republican who believes that any and all government is bad or the root of all evil in the world.

All of which makes his comments in testimony before the Senate Budget Committee last week all the more urgent.

Testifying before the panel Tuesday, he put his concerns succinctly and bluntly: "I have never been more concerned about the future of our country. America is going broke."

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The total federal debt is pushing close to \$12 trillion and is growing at a pace unseen since World War II. The annual deficit is projected to continue at record levels for up to a decade, if current spending projections hold up. And if the Democratic Congress passes its laundry list of future entitlements, Wolf estimates that every American man, woman and child could wind up owing \$184,000.

That's a lot of change, folks.

And Wolf is well aware that his own party is as responsible for the drunken orgy of spending as anyone else in Washington.

Unlike many denizens of Washington, however, Wolf is trying to do something about the problem.

For each of the past three years, he introduced legislation to form a financial commission to examine all federal spending and recommend ways to trim it.

The legislation has gone nowhere, unfortunately.

This year, he's partnered with Rep. Jim Cooper, a Democrat from Tennessee, to coauthor a bill to create the Securing America's Future Economy Commission.

The SAFE Commission would be comprised of 16 members whose primary job would be to scour the entirety of the federal budget, hunting for ways to save money, cut spending, and consolidate delivery of services.

Everything, according to Wolf, from tax policy to entitlement spending, would be on the table.

Its recommendations to Congress would only receive an up-or-down vote.

Wolf and Cooper modeled the SAFE Commission after the Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission, created in 1990 to oversee closure of military bases across the nation. BRAC's list of bases to be closed were submitted to Congress as a single package that could only be OK'd or shot down.

The SAFE Commission, like BRAC before it, saves the politicians of Washington from the job they hate the most: making difficult decisions that might impair their chances for re-election.

It's a drastic step, no doubt about it, but the scope of the federal government's fiscal problems are beyond drastic. Something needs to be done, and it needs to be done in a hurry.

Our nation's future is literally in the balance.