

**ENTITLEMENT REFORM**

# Good — But Sad

When politicians face an especially vexing problem their frequent response is to form a commission. That creates the illusion of action without forcing anyone to make decisions that could offend voters or contributors.

At first we were not terribly excited by Rep. Frank Wolf's legislation requiring Congress to create a commission to address the fiscal disasters that are Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. But Wolf, a Northern Virginia Republican, and his co-sponsor, Democratic Rep. Jim Cooper of Tennessee, admit they're not big fans of commissions. They're simply frustrated that Congress will not address the entitlement problem, which seems all but certain to blow a gigantic hole in the federal budget within a decade or so.

It's a shame, Cooper said, to have to set up a commission "to force Congress to do its job, but we can't afford to keep our heads in the sand any longer." We agree. The bill — HR 3654 — would give the commission some teeth by requiring Congress to take an up-or-down vote on the recommendation from a 16-member bipartisan panel. The approach is modeled on the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission, another dereliction of congressional duty that has nevertheless achieved some real success in closing unneeded military bases while shielding Congress from much of the political fallout.

The Wolf-Cooper proposal, which has drawn bipartisan support, is in many ways a sad commentary on America's political leadership. Still, both congressmen are to be congratulated for working to force their colleagues into facing a serious problem that no one wants to tackle.