

THE CONCORD COALITION



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CONCORD COALITION'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SUPPORTS ENHANCED RESCISSION AUTHORITY FOR THE PRESIDENT

WASHINGTON — Enhanced rescission authority for the President could help reduce government waste and build public confidence in the federal budget process, according to Robert L. Bixby, executive director of The Concord Coalition.

But in congressional testimony today, Bixby cautioned that giving the President this additional tool would not be a panacea for the budget deficit and the other huge fiscal challenges facing the nation.

“This reform would have a very real cleansing effect on the legislative process and will take a step toward reducing the public cynicism about the budget process,” Bixby said. “Granting the President enhanced rescission authority would send a signal to the public that politicians in Washington are willing to set aside narrow parochial interests for the common good.”

Bixby pointed out, however, that the proposed change “would do nothing to address the underlying structural deficit resulting from existing tax and entitlement laws.” He stressed the need to address the larger fiscal problems.

“An unprecedented demographic transformation is taking hold against the backdrop of steadily rising health care costs and steadily falling national savings,” he said. “This is a dangerous combination for the future health of the economy.”

Bixby spoke at a Senate subcommittee hearing on enhanced rescission authority, which would require Congress to vote up or down on spending rescissions that have been proposed by the President. In the past, Bixby noted, most presidential rescission messages have died without a floor vote.

Today’s hearing was held by the Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management, Government Information, Federal Services, and International Security Subcommittee of the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee.

Bixby said *The Budget Enforcement Legislative Tool Act of 2009* (S. 907) embodied an approach that has received support from both sides of the aisle in Congress over the years. He suggested strengthening the legislation in two ways:

- Extend the enhanced rescission authority for the President to include special interest tax breaks and mandatory spending increases.
- Ensure that all of the savings achieved through the enhanced authority would go to deficit reduction. This principle should apply to tax and entitlement legislation as well as discretionary spending.

Bixby told the subcommittee that The Concord Coalition's public engagement initiatives around the country have made clear that Americans are frustrated with Washington, feel strongly about the need to cut wasteful spending, and want more transparency and accountability in the federal budget.

Enhanced rescission authority for the President, Bixby said, could help build the "greater public confidence in the budget process that will be necessary to make the tough choices on much larger fiscal issues."

The full text of Bixby's testimony can be found at:

<http://www.concordcoalition.org/publications/2009/1216/robert-bixbys-testimony-subcommittee-senate-homeland-security-and-government->

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The Concord Coalition is a nonpartisan, grassroots organization dedicated to balanced federal budgets and generationally responsible fiscal policy. Former U.S. Senators Warren B. Rudman (R-NH) and Bob Kerrey (D-NE) serve as Concord's co-chairs and former Secretary of Commerce Peter G. Peterson serves as president.