

# **The Bipartisan Task Force for Responsible Fiscal Action Act:** **A Bipartisan Approach to America's Greatest Fiscal Challenge**

- ❖ *Promotes Fiscal Responsibility*
- ❖ *Bipartisan, Straightforward, Solution-Driven*
- ❖ *Critical to Safeguarding the Nation's Economic Health*

## ➤ **What is the Purpose of the Bipartisan Task Force Act?**

- The Bipartisan Task Force for Responsible Fiscal Action Act of 2007 requires lawmakers to swiftly address the nation's long-term fiscal challenges, and to ensure the nation's future economic security and prosperity.
- The Act establishes a bipartisan task force of Congressional Members and Administration officials who will make bipartisan recommendations on how to immediately and substantially improve the government's long-term fiscal imbalances.
- All options will be considered by the task force, and the resulting legislative recommendations will receive expedited consideration by Congress and a final vote.

## ➤ **Why is the Bipartisan Fiscal Task Force Needed?**

- Long-term projections show an unsustainable imbalance between government spending and revenues that simply cannot be corrected by economic growth alone.
- Next year, the first of approximately 70 million Baby Boomers will begin to retire, which will explode the cost of federal health and retirement programs.
- Health care entitlements and Social Security alone will absorb an increasingly larger portion of the federal budget – 20 percent of GDP by 2034, equal to the entire federal government today. There is currently no plan in place on how to handle this looming crisis.

## ➤ **Who Will Serve on the Bipartisan Fiscal Task Force?**

- The Task Force is made up of 16 voting members, eight Republicans and eight Democrats. Four task force members each will be chosen by the Senate Majority Leader and Speaker of the House; three each by the Senate Minority Leader and the House Minority Leader; and two by the President (one of whom must be the Secretary of the Treasury). All task force members chosen by Congressional leadership must be current Members of Congress.
- The Secretary of the Treasury will serve as Task Force chairperson.

## ➤ **How Does the Bipartisan Fiscal Task Force Work?**

- The Task Force must review the current and long-term financial condition of the federal government, identify factors that impact its long-term fiscal balance, analyze potential courses of action, and provide recommendations to improve the government's long-term fiscal balance. A fiscal imbalance is defined as the gap between projected federal revenues and federal expenditures.

- The Task Force must address all aspects of the federal budget, including spending and revenues. In gathering information, the Task Force may hold hearings and draw upon data and resources from both executive and legislative branches of the federal government.
- A detailed report of the Task Force's findings, conclusions and recommendations (including legislative text required to implement these recommendations) must be submitted to Congress and the President on December 9, 2008.
- Three-quarters of the Task Force, or 12 members, must agree to the recommendations before the Task Force can submit its report to Congress and the President.

➤ **What Happens to the Bipartisan Fiscal Task Force's Recommendations?**

- Once submitted to Congress, the Task Force's recommendations will be introduced as legislation by the chamber's Majority or Minority Leader, or their designee, within 10 calendar days of the start of the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress, or on the first session day thereafter.
- The legislation is referred jointly to all committees of jurisdiction and the Budget Committees. These committees must consider and report the legislation, without amendment, within 10 calendar days after the date of introduction, or it will be automatically discharged from the committee. The legislation can be reported from the committee with or without recommendation.
- The reported legislation is considered under an expedited procedure, which ensures it must be considered by the full House and Senate within 5 congressional session days of being reported from committee. Floor debate in both chambers is limited to 100 hours each, and the reported legislation is not amendable. Final passage requires 3/5 of the Senate (60 votes) and 3/5 of the Members of the House (261 votes).

➤ **How Does the Task Force Ensure a Bipartisan Outcome and Why is This Important?**

- **Bipartisan Designation Process**  
The Task Force is made up of 16 voting members. Both political parties are evenly represented, with eight Republicans and eight Democrats.
- **Bipartisan Recommendations**  
The bill requires that three-quarters of the Task Force's members support the recommendations made in its report. This means at least 12 members of the Task Force must support the proposals, more than the number of either political party represented.
- **Bipartisan Senate and House Consideration**  
The bill requires 3/5 of the Senate (60 votes) and 3/5 of the House (261 votes) for final passage of the bill, which is intended to ensure strong bipartisan support.
- **Bipartisanship is Critical to Solving Fiscal Challenges**  
This is not simply a Democratic or Republican problem; it impacts all Americans. But change cannot be accomplished without both political parties being invested in the outcome, and helping their constituents to understand the problem and the impact of the solutions.