



October 27, 2023

Dear Representative:

The Federal-Postal Coalition, an alliance of thirty organizations representing more than five million active and retired federal and postal employees, urges you oppose any Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 spending agreement that includes a “fiscal commission” to address the federal deficit.

A short-term funding bill, H.R. 5525, which failed in the House by a 198-232 vote on September 29, 2023, would have authorized such a commission. Similar standalone legislation, H.R. 5779, the Fiscal Commission Act of 2023, has been introduced in the House. The proposal may well resurface as Congress attempts to fund the government past November 17, 2023.

As described in the bills, the fiscal commission would consist of 16 members, including 12 members of Congress and four “outside experts” who could by majority vote furnish Congress with a privileged set of recommendations for reducing spending as well as Social Security and Medicare. Congress would be obliged, during the lame duck session in November 2024, to approve or disapprove the recommendations with minimal discussion and without amendment.

The proposed commission could effectively bypass the role of a democratically elected Congress in formulating and debating legislation and tax policy. The judgment of 12 handpicked members and four unelected outsiders would essentially supersede the role of 523 other Members of Congress. The commission should not be enacted.

Congress should budget according to our nation’s needs. That includes keeping Medicare and Social Security adequately funded, as the bedrock of middle-class health, security, and dignity in old age or disability. Congress must keep federal salaries, which already lag the private sector by an average of 24%, as competitive as possible to ensure a capable and qualified civil service.

The history of fiscal commissions and super-committees, including Simpson-Bowles in 2010, is that they either fail to reach meaningful agreements or they propose cuts to benefits for the middle class and federal workers, while setting aside difficult decisions on taxes, or even proposing further tax cuts. Such was the case with Simpson-Bowles, which failed to reach agreement and whose only enacted legacy was a three-year federal pay freeze and a permanent extra 3.6% levy collected to this day against federal wages, ostensibly to pay for retirement benefits and an extension of unemployment benefits in 2011. No other group of American citizens was asked to sacrifice in this way.

To the federal and postal workers we represent, fiscal commissions, while perhaps well-intentioned, often have unanticipated and ongoing consequences. Employees are often called upon to contribute their earnings toward some attempt at reducing the federal deficit, while elected officials avoid serious discussion on the overall federal budget and the appropriate balance between revenues and outlays.

For these reasons, the undersigned organizations ask you to please oppose the proposed fiscal commissions reflected in recent bills, or any similar fiscal commission.

Sincerely,

American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE)
American Postal Workers Union (APWU)
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
Federal Managers Association (FMA)
International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF)
International Federation of Professional & Technical Engineers (IFPTE)
National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE)
National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA)
National Association of Federal Veterinarians (NAFV)
National Association of Government Employees (NAGE)
National Association of Postal Supervisors (NAPS)
National Council of Social Security Management Associations (NCSSMA)
National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE)
National Postal Mail Handlers Union (NPMHU)
National Treasury Employees Union (NTEU)
National Weather Service Employees Organization (NWSEO)
Patent Office Professional Association (POPA)
Postal Police Officers Association (PPOA)
Professional Aviation Safety Specialists (PASS)