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Presentation by  
the Honorable David M. Walker  
Comptroller General of the United States

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# **Announcing the Introduction of a Bill to Create the SAFE Commission**

Remarks at a Press Conference  
September 26, 2007

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Thank you, Congressman Cooper and Congressman Wolf, for the invitation to be here and for your leadership on this important issue. As I have noted on numerous occasions, our nation is on an imprudent and unsustainable fiscal path. Tough choices are required to help ensure that our future is better than our past.

During the past two years, I have traveled with others to 23 states as part of the Fiscal Wake-Up Tour. During the tour it has become clear that the American people are starved for two things from their elected officials—truth and leadership. I am here today because Congressman Cooper and Congressman Wolf are trying to address this need. I joined Senators Conrad and Gregg last week when they introduced a similar effort—and I note that Senator Gregg is here today representing the two of them. These members are among those who feel strongly about the need to push the process forward by proposing bills with similar objectives in a manner that will put “everything on the table” for consideration.

At the present time, Congress is debating whether to raise the debt limit for a fifth time during the past 5 ½ years. While debate on this issue is understandable and appropriate, it’s time that we started treating the disease rather than merely debating the symptoms. This country has been diagnosed with fiscal cancer. This cancer can be cured with tough choices, but it will get worse over time if our elected officials fail to act. This fiscal cancer has been facilitated by widespread myopia, tunnel vision, and self-centeredness. It is manifested in large operating deficits and growing long-range fiscal imbalances. It is perpetuated by a lack of meaningful statutory budget controls, a very large and growing percentage of the budget that is on autopilot, a failure to pursue performance-based approaches to major spending programs and the tax preferences, and a variety of other current practices. These conditions are inappropriate and unsustainable. Hopefully, this commission, or one like it, will help to “set the operating table” for the next President and the next Congress to act in connection with these and other important matters.

Candidly, no matter which political party controls the Congress and the White House, elected officials will need both specific proposals and political cover to make the tough but necessary choices. I hope this bill and others like it will receive serious consideration by both major parties and the White House. The time to rise above partisan politics and do our patriotic duty is now. We owe it to our country, children, and grandchildren to do no less.

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## **On the Web**

Web site: [www.gao.gov/cghome.htm](http://www.gao.gov/cghome.htm)

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