United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 3, 2010

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Our growing national debt poses a dire threat to this nation's future. Ever since the economic downturn, Americans have had to make tough choices about how to make ends meet. Now it's time for leaders in Washington to do the same.

The report issued Wednesday by the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform is a courageous first step in tackling our national debt. The report shows in stark terms that solving the debt problem will require difficult choices. There is no easy way out, and Washington must lead the way. The strong bipartisan support its recommendations have already received demonstrates we can, and must, come together to solve this impending fiscal crisis. Every day that we fail to act the choices become more difficult.

We believe that now is the time to act. The situations in Ireland and Greece demonstrate that rising debt levels, left unchecked, can quickly and unpredictably force a country to take drastic austerity measures. If we don't choose to act now, we will be forced to act later with fewer and more painful options available to us.

While there are plenty of provisions in the Commission plan we do not support, our nation would be far better off with a comprehensive deficit reduction plan than without one. The report shows that we can stabilize our debt over the long term, while fostering our economic recovery now, improving our country's global competitiveness, and maintaining our commitment to protect the most vulnerable in our society. Specifically, we commend the Commission's efforts to:

- Protect our economic recovery by gradually phasing in deficit reduction and still allowing for critical investments;

- Fundamentally reform and simplify the tax code in a way that lowers rates for all taxpayers, increases progressivity, and improves the ability of businesses to compete in the global marketplace;

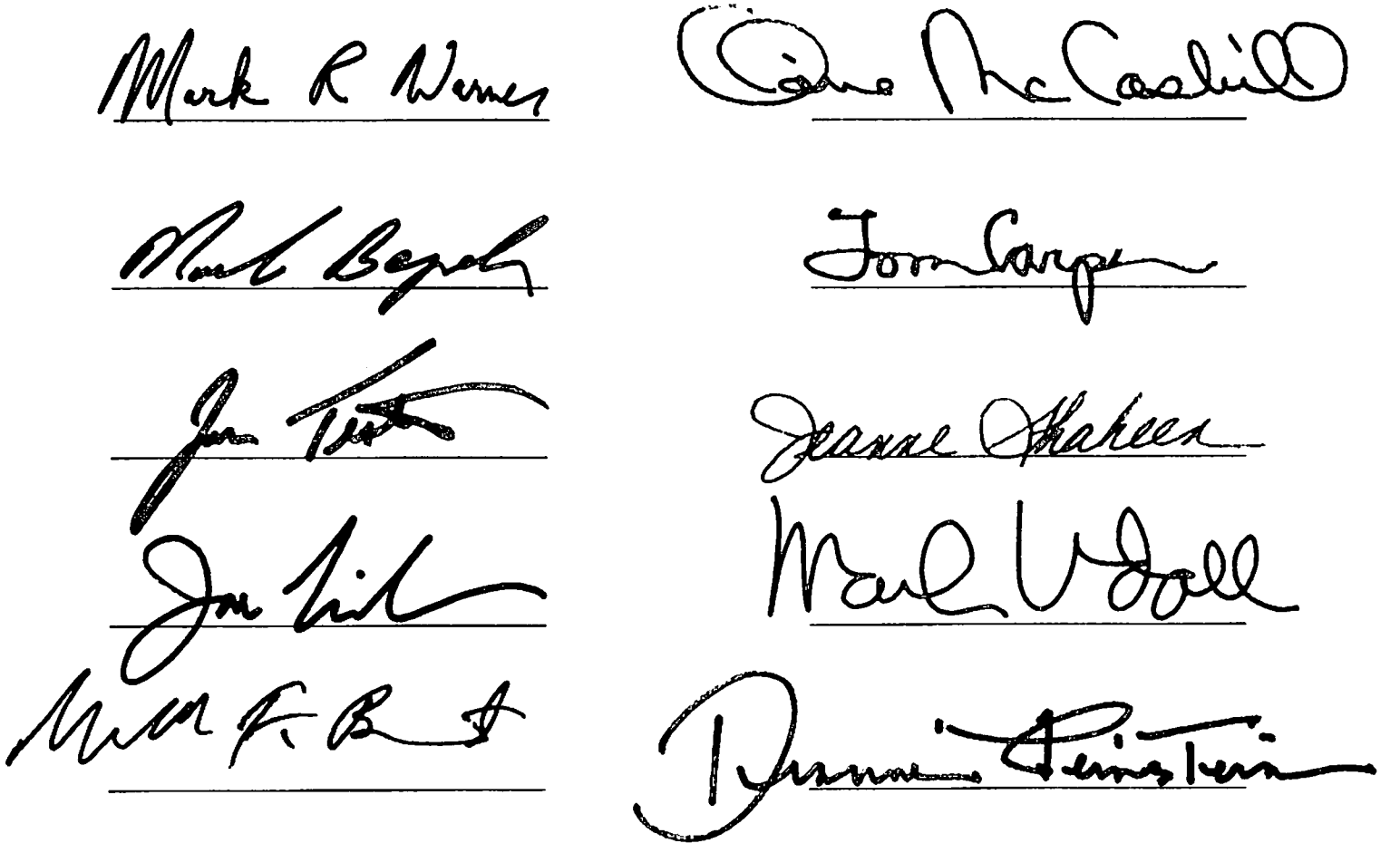
- Ensure that Social Security will be there to support seniors for at least 75 more years, while adding a new minimum benefit and further support for our oldest seniors and long-term disabled;

- Preserve and better target tax benefits that support home ownership and charitable giving; and,

- Further control the costs of health care.

Prompt action is needed to bring the country's deficit into balance and stabilize our debt over the long term. Regardless of whether the Commission's report receives the support of at least 14 of its 18 members, we urge legislative action to address these problems. The American people deserve—and demand—that we pull together to avert this looming crisis. Your leadership on this issue will be crucial to our success.

Sincerely,



Mary L. Gardner