

Ryan Prepared Opening Statement
Cooper Entitlements Hearing
June 23, 2008

- *Thank Spratt, welcome witnesses (welcome back Walker).*
- Just last week, Congressman Cooper and I had the opportunity to participate in a bi-partisan event – sponsored by the Brookings Institution – with the *sole purpose* of discussing the entitlement challenge.
- Eleven a.m. on a Wednesday; no coffee, no donuts – just Mr. Cooper and me doing our respective PowerPoints on entitlement reform. You know, we actually filled this hearing room. And I understand Brookings even had to *turn people away* because we ran out of seats.
- I've probably given that presentation 50 times in the past month or so – most back home in Wisconsin. *And the people keep coming.* Because Americans *know* there's a problem. They're beginning to understand the *magnitude* of the problem. And – I can tell you from my own experience – they're ready to hear from their Federal Government about how we plan to *solve* the problem.
- Now we just need to get *Washington* up to speed with the rest of the country.
- Chairman Spratt is doing his part – he's called more than a dozen hearings dealing with the entitlement crisis; and once again brings this issue before the Committee.
- And my friend Congressman Cooper, who requested this hearing today, and who – with Congressman Frank Wolf – has proposed a bi-partisan commission to look at ways to address this challenge.
- All should be commended for their efforts.
- It should also be a major component of the campaign debates this year – because if the candidates – *and I'm talking about every candidate for Federal office* – are going to talk about issues of importance to the American people, entitlements had better be part of the discussion.
- But I also believe it's time Congress gets to the business of doing what our constituents sent us here to do – and that's to move beyond simply talking about the problem, to actually finding *solutions*.

- Because I believe that, I've developed my own proposal – called *A Roadmap for America's Future* – that addresses this challenge in a comprehensive way, and achieves the following key objectives:
 - ▶ It Fulfills the Mission of Health and Retirement Security for all Americans;
 - ▶ It Removes the Massive Future Debt Burden; and
 - ▶ It Ensures American Jobs and Competitiveness in the 21st Century Economy.
- [Hold up Bill] I won't go through all the details here: as you can see, it's a pretty thick bill – it's hundred of pages long, with about 70 pages of report language.
- But to be clear, it is a real plan, with real proposals, real numbers to back them, and real legislation to implement it.
- I don't expect everyone to agree with every aspect of it – but I would ask that you take a look – leave your comments and input – on the website at AmericanRoadmap.org, because we all need to be a part of this discussion.
- Every expert Congress can find – from GAO, CBO, the Fed, to Heritage and Brookings – they've all come to the same conclusion: the entitlement crisis is real, it's serious, it's not going away, and it's getting dramatically worse with every year we fail to act.
- Congress has already demonstrated what *doesn't* work: ignoring it; playing the demagogue; pointing our fingers at each other – we've done all of them, and *every time* found ourselves another year deeper in the hole.
- We've got to recognize that these are not Democratic problems, or Republican problems, and neither are the solutions. We've got to build bipartisan support for action. And we've got to move beyond simply rehashing the problem – to the politically difficult, but critical task of debating, and implementing actual *solutions* for the American people.
- Thank you.