The Common Ground Coalition

On February 6, 2013, nearly 100 leaders representing 72 organizations convened in Washington, DC to discuss the national debt at the Common Ground Summit, hosted by the Campaign to Fix the Debt. Participants represented a wide range of sectors and issue areas – including think tanks, faith-based groups, health organizations, advocacy groups, charities, trade associations, businesses, and multicultural groups – and a broad spectrum of political beliefs.

Despite these different perspectives, the group was able to agree on several fundamental priorities regarding the need to address our nation’s fiscal challenges. The statement below reflects the consensus reached during a morning-long moderated discussion and real-time polling process.

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<th>Statement of Shared Priorities for the Common Ground Coalition</th>
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<td>As members of the Common Ground Coalition, we represent a broad and diverse range of interests, priorities, ideologies, missions and political perspectives. We are leaders and advocates in the areas of business, education, faith, health and human services, multicultural and millennial interests, and policy, workforce and labor, and veterans issues, among others. We are conservatives, progressives, moderates, and independents. We are college students and young professionals just starting our careers, and seniors who have been working for decades. We have different perspectives on a range of issues; but we are united in the belief that the only way to solve difficult problems, like the national debt, is for people to work openly and collaboratively toward a common solution.</td>
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<td>We come together around the importance of addressing the nation’s national debt now – recognizing that the longer we delay, the more difficult the problem will be to resolve. We support doing so in a way that bolsters a struggling economic recovery, protects long term investments that promote economic growth, empowers future generations and mitigates the impact on vulnerable populations. A fair and meaningful debt deal must ensure that everything is on the table – including both additional revenues and spending reductions – with everyone willing to put the nation’s interests above individual interests.</td>
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<td>We urge Congress, the Administration and the American people to put partisanship aside and commit themselves to a fact-based, national conversation about the scope and nature of our debt problem and the ramifications of addressing, or failing to address, the issue.</td>
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<td>We feel strongly that putting the country on a sustainable fiscal path will create economic and budgetary certainty for businesses as well as public programs, re-establishing confidence in the American economy. Conversely, continuing to drift from one crisis to the next will decrease the faith of our citizens and the financial markets in the government’s ability to tackle the significant challenges we face. It will also crowd out the nation’s ability to invest in the future, as an increasingly larger share of federal spending is directed to mandatory expenditures and the interest on our rising debt. If we fail to act now we are at serious risk of handing our children a dimmer future than we enjoy today.</td>
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<td>We therefore commit to working together on this issue to identify opportunities for collaboration and to jointly advance our common interests on behalf of a more prosperous future for all Americans.</td>
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Joining the Common Ground Coalition

The success of the Common Ground Summit led to interest among several participants in forming a vehicle for continued collaboration. This is the basis for what we are proposing as the Common Ground Coalition.

The Coalition will be comprised of diverse organizations and individuals united behind the idea that the nation must act now to address our national debt in a comprehensive and long-term fashion that will both spur economic growth and ensure the sustainability of vital federal programs like Medicare and Social Security. The statement above is intended to serve as a unifying set of principles and values that will guide all future actions by the Coalition. Specific future activities will be determined by a steering committee made up of representatives from a core group of Coalition members.

Below are some Frequently Asked Questions about the Common Ground Coalition.

Q: What does it mean to be a part of the Common Ground Coalition?

A: Members of the Coalition have formally endorsed the Statement of Shared Priorities, above. The Coalition will advocate for action on the part of our elected leaders to address the nation’s fiscal challenges in a way that aligns with the principles laid out in the statement. Specific activities will be decided by the organizations and individuals who make up the Coalition, primarily through a representative steering committee.

Membership in the Coalition in no way precludes an organization or individual from taking positions or advocating for outcomes beyond those described in the statement. The diverse and bipartisan nature of the Coalition will inevitably bring together groups that differ on a wide range of issues, and the intent is not to stifle divergent viewpoints on the part of its members. In fact, this diversity makes the ability of the Coalition to reach consensus on certain points that much more powerful, and is one of the most compelling features of our effort. Having bridged ideological divisions and varied priorities, the Coalition will serve as a model for the type of cooperation and trust-building that must develop between and among Capitol Hill and the White House if the country is going to move from partisan gridlock to solutions that secure prosperity for future generations.

Q: Who is a part of the Coalition?

A: The Coalition will be comprised of organizations and individual leaders from a broad range of sectors, interest areas, and political affiliations. Where possible we encourage entire organizations to join the Coalition and lend the support of their leaders and members. However, we recognize that there are situations in which individual leaders may wish to join the Coalition independent of the organizations that they represent. In these cases we welcome individual leaders, acting on their own behalf, to join the Coalition as well.

Q: What is the role of the Campaign to Fix the Debt in the Coalition?

A: The Campaign to Fix the Debt will be one member of the Coalition, alongside the other organizations and individual leaders who join. To minimize the burden on other Coalition members, Fix the Debt will provide logistical and administrative support to the Coalition. In terms of decision-making, Fix the Debt will have the same rights as any other member and will be bound to any policies or procedures that are created by the Coalition as a whole. The Coalition will be considered a separate entity from the Campaign to Fix the Debt and will operate independently.
Q: What is the governance of the Coalition?

A: The Coalition will be a self-governing entity whose decisions will be made by its members, primarily through a representative steering committee. Once a core group of organizations have joined, we will hold a meeting with members to define the specifics of the governance process, including the structure of the Coalition, decision-making procedures, and other issues, as necessary.

Q: How and when will the Coalition be formally announced?

A: Once the core group is identified, the Campaign to Fix the Debt plans to issue a press release announcing that it has joined the Common Ground Coalition along with the other founding organizations and individuals. Other members may wish to issue their own press releases or engage in other media to publicize their involvement. Members may also decide to hold a kick-off event for the Coalition, which could involve a press and media component.

Q: Who should I contact for more information on the Coalition?

A: For more information, please contact Frank Micciche at Micciche@fixthedebt.org or Phong Dinh at Dinh@fixthedebt.org.