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A NIGHT AT THE MOVIES

On Thursday, August 21, a new documentary film was viewed in 360 theatres nationwide. The film was entitled "**I.O.U.S.A.**" Your *DocOnomics* authors watched the film with pen and popcorn in hand. The film's fundamental message is that an economic disaster is set to befall the nation if the Federal Government's \$9.5 trillion deficit and \$53 trillion in total liabilities continue to grow. We agree. In fact, it surprised us that the documentary was not called "**Attention! Deficit Disorder!**" Maybe that will be the sequel.

We thought "**I.O.U.S.A.**" did an excellent job of examining and communicating the scope and significance of our massive national debt, its contributing factors and what it means to our generation and the next two generations. The film is being called the Dollars and Sense version of "Super Size Me", the 2004 documentary that exposed the dangers to human health from the fast food industry.

Although the film features cameo appearances by comedians Steve Martin, Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert, at the center of the film is David M. Walker, who recently resigned as Comptroller General of the United States after almost 10 years on the job. Toward the end of his tenure as the country's highest-ranking Government watchdog, Walker initiated a nationwide campaign entitled the "Fiscal Wake Up" tour in which he took to the road to plant the seeds for fiscal reform at the highest levels of Government and among mainstream consumers.

Today, Walker is the newly-appointed President and Chief Executive Officer of the Peter G. Peterson Foundation. This is a very well-financed non-partisan organization that is pressuring Congress and the White House to take real action to treat the financial cancer that is killing our country. At the grass-roots level, the Petersen Foundation is increasing public awareness of the precarious state of our national finances stemming from:

- The debt and deficit mentality that pervades American government and its constituent voters
- Entitlement benefits that are not affordable in their present form
- Deteriorating healthcare economics
- Dependence on imported energy
- Deteriorating American educational standards and declining global competitiveness

Following the film, a live Town Hall panel discussion of distinguished financial experts (including Warren Buffett) was broadcast to the theatre-goers. The panelists pointedly identified that perhaps the biggest threat to our national solvency is the approaching healthcare crisis as 80 million Baby Boomers begin their transition to entitlement and benefit programs that simply cannot be maintained at current levels. As physicians, you stand at ground zero of this problem. You not only will be affected as taxpayers who must contribute to the expanding Federal war chest but as practitioners who will be under steady pressure to accept less compensation for your services.

As a result, you must be combat ready to defend your income and wealth from the predatory nature

of these trends. ***DocOnomics*** will continue to serve as your strategist, both on wide screen and in the comfort of your home or office.

In conclusion, we hope that "I.O.U.S.A" can deliver an important wake up call on the cusp of the Democratic and Republican conventions. For additional information, we suggest that you visit the Peterson Foundation "mission control" website at <http://www.pgpf.org/> and become familiar with their work. The Peterson Foundation has the potential to become a critically important voice for major political reform, which in the end could be of immense benefit to the physician community.