



November 23, 2010

National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform
1650 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20504

Dear Commissioners:

On behalf of ASQ, a community of people passionate about quality and the leading authority on quality in all fields, organizations, and industries, I strongly urge that the Commission delete any reference to the elimination of the Baldrige National Quality Program as an example of recommended spending cuts.

Recently renamed the Baldrige Performance Excellence Program, a program that ASQ has administered since 1991, Baldrige is far more than just an awards program; it's a **culture of performance excellence**. While the Program has touched hundreds of thousands of American citizens in overwhelmingly beneficial ways, it directly provides a significant economic payback to America far exceeding the underlying cost of the program. From the employees of the Program applicants (those who apply for the award and use the Baldrige framework to improve their operations) to the customers of these organizations who benefit from the focus on customer service and efficient management structure, participants in the Baldrige community strive to implement the principles of Baldrige in a way that measurably improves the fabric of American society.

Hundreds of volunteer Baldrige examiners contribute literally thousands of hours reviewing Baldrige applications. On-site visits are conducted with those applicants worthy of this next step following the application review. Importantly, however, every Baldrige applicant gets a feedback report on what they need to improve, as well as what they are doing well, even if they aren't considered for a site visit. And, typically, it takes an applicant many years of applying for the Program to even get a site visit—or certainly to receive the award. That means that all those organizations are striving to do better and better each year by using the Baldrige criteria. There is no other program like this in the world and in fact, other countries utilize the Baldrige Performance Excellence Program as a model.

It would send an unfortunate and misguided signal if we eliminated a program that our government has supported for more than two decades as the model in performance excellence. Certainly this is not the right message to our U.S. companies that have learned firsthand how beneficial the Program is. And, with the popularity the Program has gained globally, it would not be a positive message to other countries.

I respectfully urge you to reconsider including the Baldrige Performance Excellence Program in your plan to cut government programs. The net return on the annual investment in the Program cannot only be measured in positive payback dollars, but in the sustainability of organizational performance excellence.

Sincerely,

Paul Borawski
ASQ Chief Executive Officer